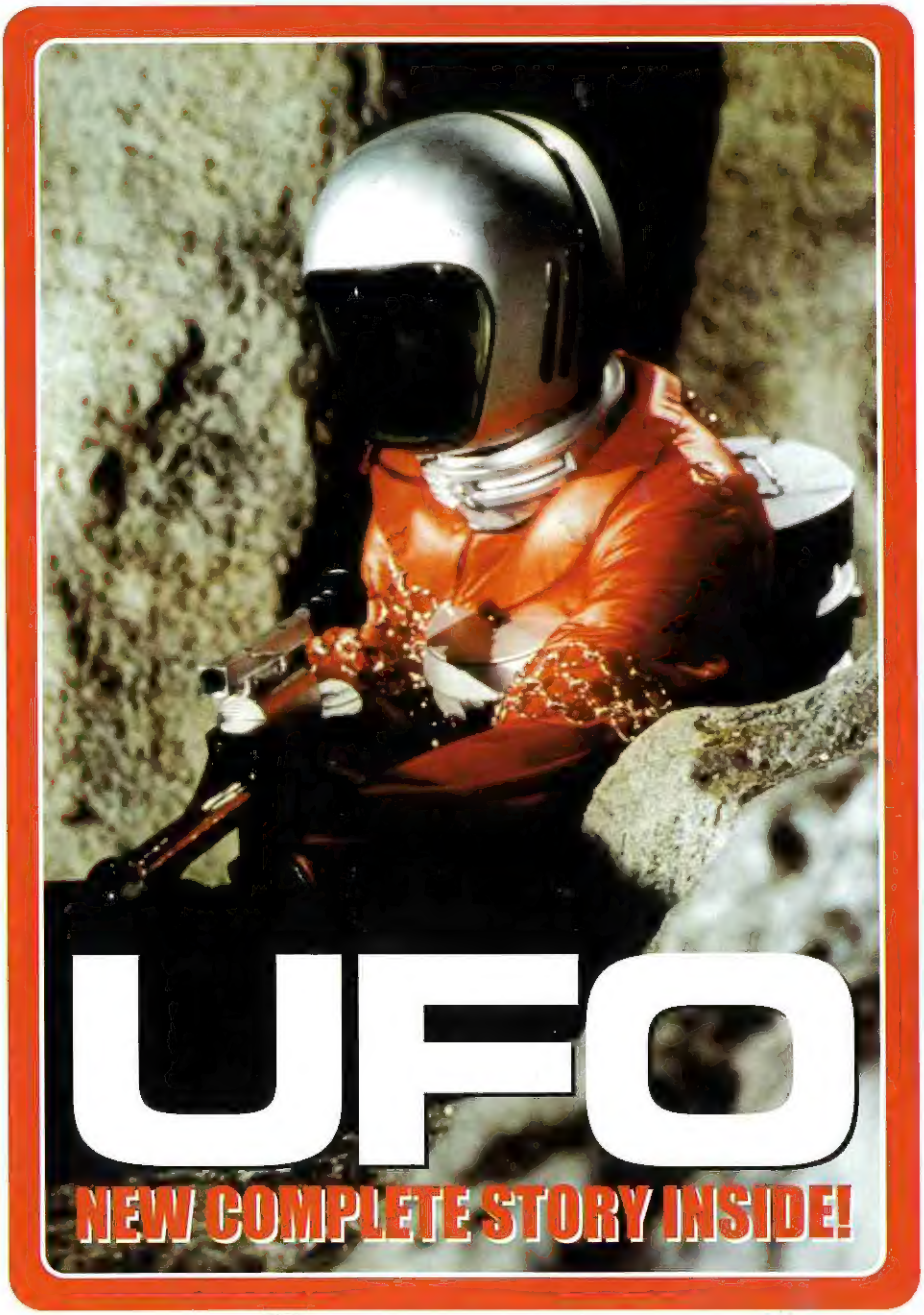
countdown

Stand By For Action!

STINGRAY

INTO ACTION WITH TROY TEMPEST!



UFO

NEW COMPLETE STORY INSIDE!

CAPTAIN SCARLET

FACES A NEW THREAT FROM THE MYSTERONS

A DARING MISSION FOR INTERNATIONAL RESCUE!

THUNDERBIRDS

TV stars on strings

See back page

SPACE: 1999

INTO INFINITY WITH THE CREW OF MOONBASE ALPHA!

TERRAHAWKS

DEFENDING EARTH FROM THE ANDROIDS OF MARS!

NEW STORY BEGINS TODAY!

FAB YEARBOOK (Volume 1 No.2)

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Contributors - **Chris Bentley**, **Martin Gainsford**, **Tim Mallett**, **Glenn Pearce**, **Neil Swain**, **Ralph Titterton**
Special Thanks to **Steven Begg**, **Ed Bishop** and **Christopher Penfold**

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The organisers would like to thank the following people who kindly accepted our invitation to attend the convention (although circumstances beyond their control may have prevented some of them from appearing): **Gerry Anderson**, **Tony Atkins**, **Bob Bell**, **Ed Bishop**, **John Blundall**, **Terry Curtis**, **Graydon Gould**, **David Graham**, **Marcus Hearn**, **John Hough**, **Bill James**, **Brian Johnson**, **David Lane**, **Dolores Mantez**, **Robin McDonald**, **Chloe Meddings**, **Elliott Meddings**, **Nick Meddings**, **Noah Meddings**, **Francis Matthews**, **Zienia Merton**, **Christopher Penfold**, **Alan Perry**, **Arthur Provis**, **Shane Rimmer**, **Gito Santana**, **Alan Shubrook** and **Mike Trim**
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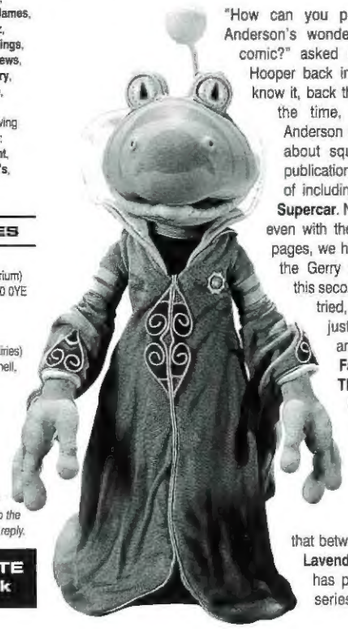


"How can you possibly get all of Gerry Anderson's wonderful film series into one comic?" asked *Countdown* editor Dennis Hooper back in 1971. Although he didn't know it, back then Hooper had it good: at the time, there were only seven Anderson series that he had to worry about squeezing into his fledgling publication, since he had no intention of including **Four Feather Falls** and **Supercar**. Now, it's thirty years later and even with the benefit of twice as many pages, we haven't been able to fit all of the Gerry Anderson productions into this second FAB Yearbook! Oh, we've tried, we've certainly tried, but we just couldn't properly fit in anything from **Four Feather Falls**, **Crossroads To Crime**, **Thunderbird 6**, **The Investigator** or **The Day After Tomorrow** - and **Lavender Castle** only appears by virtue of this totally gratuitous picture of Sproggle.

The problem, of course, is that between **Four Feather Falls** and **Lavender Castle**, Gerry Anderson has produced fourteen television series totalling 478 individual episodes, as well as four feature films and four unsold pilots - and there will very shortly be 26 episodes of his new animated series **Firestorm** to add to that tally. Any single publication that even attempts to offer suitable coverage to that body of work is going to have to be some sort of great fat doorstep of a book!

Hopefully, though, there's at least *something* here for everyone who enjoys Gerry's particular brand of entertainment. Within these pages are more of the best interviews from earlier issues of FAB (some of which are now out of print), but as with the first Yearbook (still available from Fanderson Sales) this isn't simply a slavish reprint of the pages of those magazines. For one thing, the pages themselves are twice the size and the text has been entirely revised and formatted to suit. For another, the photos illustrating the articles have, in the main, not appeared in FAB before (or anywhere else for that matter), or if they have appeared before, they're now bigger, or cropped differently, or (better yet) in colour. There are also two entirely new interviews that have not been published before, and our back page pastiche of *Countdown*'s landmark 'TV Stars on Strings' feature.

However, all of this is simply the icing on the cake that is Fanderson's coming of age birthday bash as we celebrate the club's 21st anniversary at our 2002 convention. Welcome to the party and remember - anything can happen in the next 48 hours!

Chris Bentley (May 2002)

ANDERSON SCREENOGRAPHY

Fireball XL5 (1961/62) - Voice Artist
- All 39 episodes (Colonel Steve Zodiac)
- *Plant Man From Space* (Dr. Howard Rootes)
- *Spy In Space* (Fireball XL9 Co-Pilot)
- *Space Pirates* (Fireball XL9 Pilot)
- *Space Pen* (General Shand)
- *Convict In Space* (Research Control)
- *Flight To Danger* (Technician)
- *The Forbidden Planet* (Dr. Stamp)
- *The Robot Freighter Mystery* (Joe Briggs)
- *Drama At Space City* (Space Control)
- *The Day The Earth Froze* (Emergency Tannoy)
- *Invasion Earth* (Fireball XL18 Pilot) (Fireball XL24 Pilot)
- *Space City Special* (Video Phone Alert) (Airport Control)

Thunderbirds (1964/66) - Voice Artist
- *Alias Mr. Hackenbacker* (Captain Ashton) (Reporter)

Thunderbirds Are Go (1966) - Voice Artist (Captain Paul Travers)

Captain Scarlet And The Mysterons (1966/67) - Voice Artist
- *The Mysterons* (Captain Grey) (World President)
- *Winged Assassin* (Captain Grey) (DT19 Pilot)
- *Big Ben Strikes Again* (Captain Grey) (Policeman)
- *Manhunt* (Captain Grey) (Guard)
- *Point 783* (Supreme Commander)
- *Operation Time* (Captain Grey) (General Tiempo) (Porter Benson)
- *Renegade Rocket* (Base Commander)
- *White As Snow* (Captain Grey) (USS Panther II Captain)
- *Seek And Destroy* (Fire Chief)
- *Spectrum Strikes Back* (World President)
- *Avalanche* (General Ward)
- *Shadow Of Fear* (Captain Grey) (Dr. Breck)
- *The Inquisition* (Policeman)

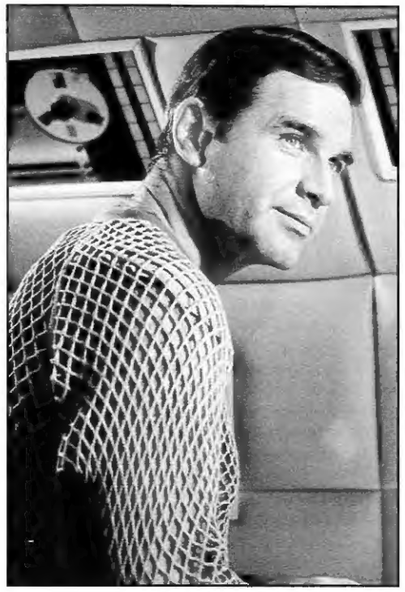
UFO (1969)
- *Sub-Smash* (Lt. Jim Lewis)

Captain Grey, voiced by Paul Maxwell in **Captain Scarlet And The Mysterons**, oddly wearing Captain Ochre's uniform

STEVE ZODIAC - FIREBALL XL5

PAUL MAXWELL

The late Paul Maxwell **provided the distinctive tones of Colonel Steve Zodiac in Gerry Anderson's** Fireball XL5. **He returned to the Anderson fold to voice guest characters in** Thunderbirds **and** Thunderbirds Are Go, **and also voiced Captain Grey for** Captain Scarlet And The Mysterons. **This was his final interview before his death in 1991.**



Canadian actor Paul Maxwell **was best-known to fans of the Gerry Anderson programmes as the voice of Colonel Steve Zodiac in the early Supermarionation series** Fireball XL5. **He later provided the voices for Captain Paul Travers in** Thunderbirds Are Go, **Captain Ashton in the** Thunderbirds **episode *Alias Mr. Hackenbacker*, and a range of character voices for** Captain Scarlet And The Mysterons **including Captain Grey and the World President. Maxwell was also seen in person as Lieutenant Jim Lewis in the classic** UFO **episode *Sub-Smash*.**

A graduate of Yale School of Drama, Maxwell came to England in the early Sixties after an extensive career in Hollywood appearing in series such as Alfred Hitchcock Presents, Highway Patrol, M-Squad **and** Sea Hunt. **His first British film role was in Spencer Gordon Bennet's** Submarine Seahawk **(1959) and after** Fireball XL5, **he went on to star in** Shadow Of Fear **(1963) and** City Of Fear **(1965). He was regularly seen throughout the Sixties and Seventies in episodes of** The Saint, The Baron, The Champions, Court Martial, Randall And Hopkirk Deceased, Out Of The Unknown, Undermind, The Adventurer **and** Return Of The Saint, **and also appeared as a regular character in British television's longest running soap** Coronation Street, **where he played the part of the American G.I. Steve Tanner.**

In addition, Maxwell was seen in feature films such as The Pink Panther Strikes Again **(1976),** A Bridge Too Far **(1977),** Aliens **(1986) and** Indiana Jones And The Last Crusade **(1989), as well appearing on television in** Howard's Way, The Man Who Lived At The Ritz **and** Perry Mason, **and on stage in productions of *On Golden Pond*, *Brighton Beach Memoirs* and *Death Of A Salesman*.**

Paul Maxwell died from cancer on December 19th, 1991. He made just one appearance at a Fanderson convention - Fanderson 90 - and the following interview was conducted by then Fanderson chairman Neil Swain **at that event. Speaking of work which had occupied just a few weeks of his career nearly thirty years previously, Maxwell was understandably vague about his experiences of** Fireball XL5, **although the interview did successfully convey his enthusiasm for the series, and his bemusement at having been so well remembered as a puppet's voice.**

To begin with, perhaps you could tell us how you first became involved with Gerry Anderson and his work?
As I remember, my agent called up and said there was some voice-over work and would I be interested, and I said, "Yes, let's hear about it." He explained that it was a puppet series, and who was involved and so on. So I went along but I don't even remember if I auditioned for it or if we just went straight into a recording session. Perhaps Gerry could confirm whether I was hired immediately on the strength of what I had done previously, or if I had to actually read passages from the script - I don't really remember. It was all such a long time ago.

You might remember that I was in **Coronation Street** in 1967 for a period of about eight months, and that has hung on to the present day - people still remember that. I've done so many things before and since, and yet that is the one connection that most people seem to make.

But to think that my voice has become a part of this extraordinary gathering of fans of the Anderson series... I find that very difficult to cope with. I can't really slot it in. You know, it's one thing if you appear in a programme that's filmed and there is a certain association that you can assimilate, but to think that your voice has become so familiar to such a large audience... I find that a little bit difficult to acclimatise to.

How do you get cast as a voice artist? Is the process the same as for a normal acting job?
In a sense. A lot of the work that I do today is voice-overs in television and radio commercials, and a certain amount of dubbing of foreign films into 'American-ese' for the American market. As far as the commercials are concerned, one makes a little audition tape of yourself reading different types of material, different types of products in different ways, and you compile maybe a five or ten minute tape - the audition tape - and that is circulated by your voice agency. People in the advertising world decide that they like the sound of your voice for a particular product and then they hire you.

Above: Paul Maxwell as Lieutenant Jim Lewis in the **UFO** episode *Sub-Smash*

The crew of **Fireball XL5**: Dr. Venus, Professor Matthew Matic and Colonel Steve Zodiac

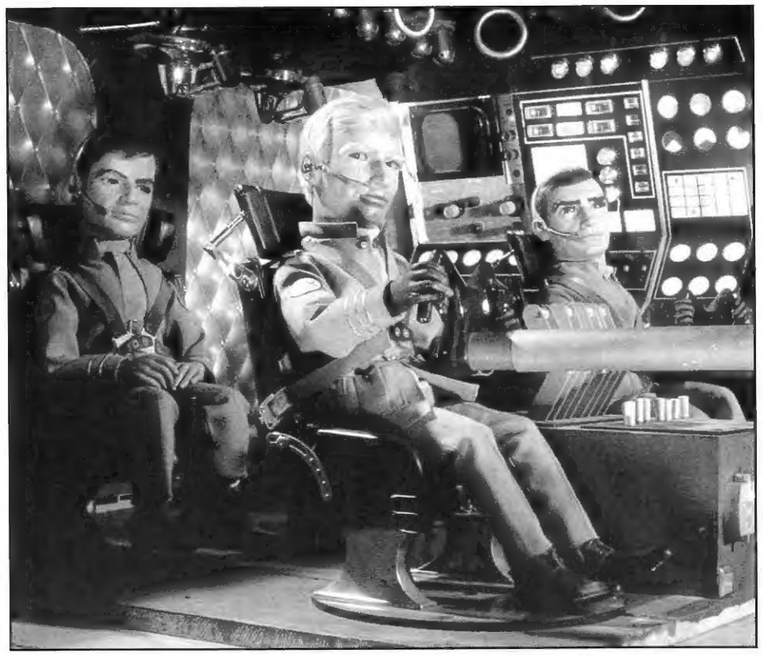
Could you tell us how long it would take you to record an episode of Fireball XL5**?**
I feel at a loss, in a sense, because this was a job that, as I remember it, entailed going to a recording studio with several other actors and sitting around a microphone for quite a few hours on one day, and we would record maybe one or maybe two or three episodes at a time. You would do this in a vacuum almost like you might do a radio show - a radio production - and these clever people took that voice tape and somehow fitted the puppets' actions to the pre-recorded voice tape. There was some electronic way of making the mouths open and close on the vowels that you had previously taped, but it was all magic as far as I was concerned.

I hope I'm not shattering some illusions here - like we actually sat about in the costumes like the puppets and pretended that we were actually doing the actions! It was more like doing a radio show and if you made mistakes there were always ways and means of correcting it - taking scissors to the audio tape and editing it together - and it would come out as a pretty good performance.

How much licence were you given in developing the voices of the characters?
As I remember, we had total freedom of movement in terms of how we wanted to approach a character. If you're playing, as I did, Steve Zodiac, I adapted that to my own normal vocal delivery, but I would put something light into it, or become a very deep-voiced, tough kind of guy. You adapted the voice quality and method of diction to the kind of character that you decided would fit that particular part.

It was Sylvia Anderson who actually organised who did what - you couldn't have two fellers talking exactly the same, so one would do the low voice and the other would do the high voice, whatever was appropriate. Yes, we did have a considerable amount of direction when it came to actual character work, but when it was a straight part, a straight leading part, then it was normally just a normal delivery.

How different was it working on the later shows, Thunderbirds **and** Captain Scarlet, **to how it was on** Fireball XL5**?**
I don't think there was a great deal of difference as far as the actors were concerned. An actor's responsibility is to make the dialogue believable. If it sounds like it's being read, or if it sounds a bit inhuman then it doesn't work. If it's going to be believable, you've got to make the particular dialogue sound as though it's really honest-to-God conversation - you can't afford to read it as though you might be reading some other kind of literature.



Did you ever disagree with any of the dialogue that was given for your character to say?
No, it's up to the writers really to determine what the character would say, and it's up to the actor to interpret what the writer has written in the script.

I did have a problem in my early days with Steve Tanner in **Coronation Street**. When I came into that show, they had six different writers on the programme, and of course, each one had come up with a script that involved the character that I was supposed to play. And each of them had a different idea of what the character was supposed to be like and how he was supposed to sound, and it was up to me to try and alter those scripts so that it was the same man in each of these writers' scripts, so that was quite difficult. But as far as Steve Zodiac goes, they were very good scripts to start with, so we didn't have very much trouble with that at all.

Did you ever get to see the actual models and the special effects?
In the beginning, no. I don't know about the other members of the cast, whether they actually saw them or not, but I had not had the opportunity to see the models when we did the recording. They

The crew of Zero X in **Thunderbirds Are Go**: Brad Newman, Greg Martin and Captain Paul Travers

Lt. Jim Lewis (Paul Maxwell) and Lt. Nina Barry (Dolores Mantez) tend to the injured Lt. Chin (Anthony Chinn) in the **UFO** episode *Sub-Smash*

may have shown us sketches of the kind of person that we were going to be, but I can't really recall ever seeing one until after the event, and then I thought, "Well, that makes sense - he looks like I sound, or I sound like he looks!"

What was it like working with the other cast members, David Graham and John Bluthal?
Marvellous! Marvellous! It was a very friendly warm association that we all had. No personalities ever got in the way of what we were doing. We had a lot of laughs and we enjoyed ourselves. I hope I'm speaking on their behalf as well as my own. I enjoyed it - I don't know about them.

It always seems to cause a lot of amusement amongst audiences when Venus calls Steve a 'tootie'.
A tootie?! I don't recall that. Your memory is better than mine. You must understand that I have had so many scripts of different kinds over the years that to be specific about what has gone before is a little bit difficult. Unfortunately, I think with a vast majority of actors, whether it's a stage play, a television play or whatever, you can sweat over memorising all of those lines but after a period of several weeks they have to make room for fresh material. The lines get lost in the mental computer and it's very difficult to draw them back into the present.

I recently did a production of *Death Of A Salesman* in Edinburgh, which was a mammoth job of memorisation, and the lines stayed with me for approximately two or three months and then they started to fade - and now I don't think I could even quote you one or two of the speeches verbatim, word for word, because new things have come in and one has to give over one's attention to the new material.

Do you have any preference to working in film, television or theatre?
Yes, I have to be honest about this, I prefer working in front of a live audience. Theatre work is most satisfying. You get an immediate response - you say something funny, you make people laugh, you get that response immediately, whereas if you're doing television or films or whatever and you're supposed to be a funny man, you never know whether it's going to be funny or not because the director has complete control of how the camera work is organised or how the editing will go, and it may not be funny at all - it may have been screamingly funny on the set, but by the time it appears on the screen it may not be how you intended. So, I like to work with a live audience whenever possible.

We saw you recently in a film called Sahara...
Did you?! Well, that's interesting because there's a history about that film. John Guillermin was the director that I worked with at the time, and we spent three or four days filming somewhere here in London. I was then supposed to fly out to Israel to do four more days' filming, but not all in one visit - I was supposed to go out and do two days and then come back to England, and in about another month or so I was to go out and do another couple of days and so on.

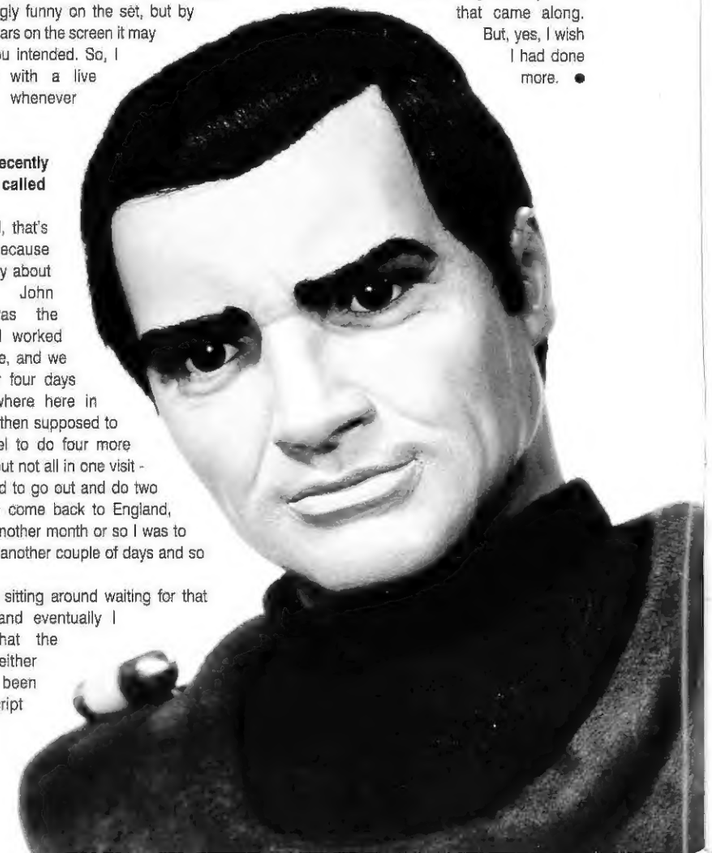
I was just sitting around waiting for that location call and eventually I found out that the director had either quit or had been fired, the script had been totally rewritten, and some recasting had been done. I never did get to Israel to shoot the rest of it and I had assumed that the few days I had filmed on **Sahara** had been scrubbed - cut out of the whole film. Then I found out that I still appear at the very beginning of that film...?

Yes, that's right.
I must have a word with my agent. There may be a dollar or two owing. I had assumed otherwise having been recast. Thank you for mentioning that!

You also worked on Aliens. **Can you tell us a little about that?**
The sequence where I played Van Leuwen occurred very early in the film and I thought that maybe if people came late to the cinema or happened to turn around to look at the seat number, that they would miss me.

It was a very short sequence, but it was very pleasant to work on. Very pleasant indeed. Sigourney Weaver happens to have been at the same drama school that I had been to. She came about 20 years after I had graduated, so I didn't have an association with her, but I'm glad to see that she has done so very well in films. I can't really tell you very much about **Aliens** - it was just a couple of days' work. The film turned out to be quite magnificent I think.

Would you have like to have made another series of Fireball XL5**?**
Looking back on it, I would have, yes. Let's face it, an actor has to live and it would have been nice to have had a little more work along that line. As I remember, it only took up a very small proportion of my acting year for this particular series and one had to rely on any work that came along. But, yes, I wish I had done more. ●



Captain Grey, voiced by Paul Maxwell in **Captain Scarlet And The Mysterons**, this time in the correct uniform

CDR. ED STRAKER - UFO

ED BISHOP

Captain Blue, voiced by Ed Bishop in **Captain Scarlet And The Mysterons**

Ed Bishop **has the unique distinction of being the only actor to voice a leading puppet character in one of the Supermarionation series (Captain Blue in** Captain Scarlet And The Mysterons**) and to also portray the leading character in one of Gerry Anderson's live-action series (Ed Straker in** UFO**).** Chris Bentley **spoke to him at the National Museum of Photography, Film & Television in Bradford, prior to a special screening of Gerry Anderson's** Doppelgänger **feature film in July 1996.**

Ed Bishop **was born in Brooklyn, New York in 1932, but has spent the greater part of the last 40 years living and working in England. He made his professional debut as an actor in Granada Television's** Drama 61 **presentation, *Edge Of Truth*, and went on to appear on stage in *Look Homeward, Angel* and *Bye Bye Birdie*. He made his feature film debut in Stanley Kubrick's** Lolita **(1961) and subsequently appeared in** The War Lover **(1962),** The Mouse On The Moon **(1963),** The Bedford Incident **(1965) and** You Only Live Twice **(1967).**

Bishop received critical acclaim for his portrayal of John F. Kennedy in Joan Littlewood's production of *MacBird*, and made numerous guest appearances on television in series such as The Saint, The Baron, Court Martial **and** Man In A Suitcase **before being cast in the co-starring role as the voice of Captain Blue in Gerry Anderson's** Captain Scarlet And The Mysterons**. He went on to appear in Anderson's live-action feature film** Doppelgänger **in a part which led directly to the starring role as Commander Ed Straker in** UFO**. His other work for Gerry Anderson has included a guest role in *The First Circle*, an episode of** The Protectors**, the narration for** The Day After Tomorrow **pilot episode *Into Infinity*, and the voice of one of the characters in** Alien Attack**, a commercial for Jif Dessert Toppings.**

Ed Bishop has appeared in over 25 feature films during the last 30 years, including 2001: A Space Odyssey **(1968),** Diamonds Are Forever **(1971),** Brass Target **(1978) and** The Lords Of Discipline **(1983). He has made over 60 television appearances in programme as diverse as** Out Of The Unknown, Colditz, Jackanory, 1990, It Ain't Half Hot Mum, The Professionals, Dick Turpin, The Two Ronnies, The Young Indiana Jones Chronicles **and** Top Of The Pops**. He also continues to work both in the theatre and on radio, where he has been Radio 4's definitive Philip Marlowe in a series of adaptations of Raymond Chandler novels.**

I understand that in your early years you were encouraged to take up banking as a career. How, then, did you come to be drawn into acting?
Well, my background is very 'WASP', White Anglo Saxon Protestant - what you'd call middle class, staid. My father's people left Guildford, Surrey in 1639 and settled in Guildford, Connecticut, so it's a very old, respectable (and impoverished, I hasten to add) family. Everybody did everything that they were supposed to - you were a schoolteacher, you were a lawyer - and the idea that somebody would want to be an actor was an absolute anathema to anybody in our family.

When I left Harvard University in Boston, they did a survey of the most respectable professions and trades in America that you could be in: number one was a doctor, number two, I think, was a lawyer, and then maybe a dentist, a teacher and so forth. And down at the bottom of the list - I think it was twenty-third of all the trades and professions - was a migratory farm worker: these guys who go around picking fruit. The one just above that was 'actor'! So there was a lot of social pressure against you to go in that way. My father had been in banking, and there was a lot of pressure for me to follow in his footsteps, so that's why I didn't get started until I was very late in the business.

I didn't turn professional until I was twenty-nine years old. By that time, all the young parts had gone away. But I started out with two years in the army, and then I had two years in business school, and I worked for a year in a bank. And then in '58 I said, "To hell with it!" I wanted to go to Boston University to be an actor, which is what I did. And then I got the scholarship to LAMBDA which brought me to London.

Once you got here, of course, you stayed. Why here particularly?
Well, the simple reason was that I just got busy. I left LAMBDA on July 14, 1960, and I had a job in August at a theatre in Croydon. Then I got into three consecutive West

Above: Ed Bishop as Felix Dobell in the BBC's 1975 three-part adaptation of Muriel Spark's **The Girls Of Slender Means**

ANDERSON SCREENOGRAPHY

Captain Scarlet And The Mysterons
(1966/67) - Voice Artist
All 32 episodes (Captain Blue)
Doppelgänger (1968) (David Poulson)
UFO (1969/70)
All 26 episodes (Cdr. Ed Straker)
The Protectors (1971)
The First Circle (Col. John Hunter)
The Day After Tomorrow - *Into Infinity* (1975) (Narration)
Alien Attack (Jif Commercial) (1977) - Voice Artist
Space Police Promotional Film (1994) (Narration)
Captain Scarlet And The Return Of The Mysterons (2000) - Voice Artist (Captain Blue)
Captain Scarlet S.I.G. (2001) - Voice Artist (Captain Blue)

Ed Bishop in his most famous role - as Ed Straker in **UFO**

Captain Blue with Colonel White and Lieutenant Green in the Cloudbase Control Room in **Captain Scarlet And The Mysterons**

End productions, one right after the other. As a matter of fact, when they put out the notice that one musical I was in was closing, I was rehearsing during the day on another show. So I had three shows, a year and a half had gone by, and I hadn't stopped working. It was incredible!

I was writing to my actor friends in America, and they'd be selling liquor, or working in real estate, and they'd say, "My God, Bishop, you're going to do another show!" They were delighted and I was pleased - I had an agent by that time, I'd met someone and we'd got married, so it just seemed like a natural progression. As long as I was employed and, eventually, paying my bills for my family, I was content to stay here. And I didn't think America needed another out-of-work actor - I thought they had enough. As long as I was working, that was the only criterion I used.

By that time, you had changed your name - from George to Edward?
Yes, because there was already an actor in Equity with that name. You can't have two actors with the same name, so I had to choose another, and that's why I became Edward Bishop. And then when I worked with Gerry, he suggested I should drop the 'ward' off the Edward, so that's how I adopted the name Ed Bishop.

Was there any particular reason why you picked Edward?
No - it's very hard to change your name mid-stream. As I say, I was about thirty years old, and to suddenly have to change your name is kind of amusing, so I just went through the names, and Edward seemed all right.

You first worked for Gerry Anderson on Captain Scarlet And The Mysterons, **providing the voice of Captain Blue. When you started recording the dialogue for that show, did you have any idea who and what the characters were, or were you just going in and reading the script?**
Well, the whole Century 21 Organisation - Gerry with Reg Hill and the writers such as Tony Barwick - was 150% professional, they really were. There was nothing cheap or corner-cutting about them. All the actors were on the same money, even if they were playing a small part (which is a good psychological thing), and it just made for a happy environment every time we got together, two days a month. If they had a small character come on, with maybe only four or five lines as a guard, what most companies would do is they'd say, "Hey, Eddie, can you do a funny voice for that guard?" and you'd do it, but it's 'el cheapo'. But with Gerry, if they had a guy come in for six lines, they'd book an actor in at the same fee, and I was very impressed by that.

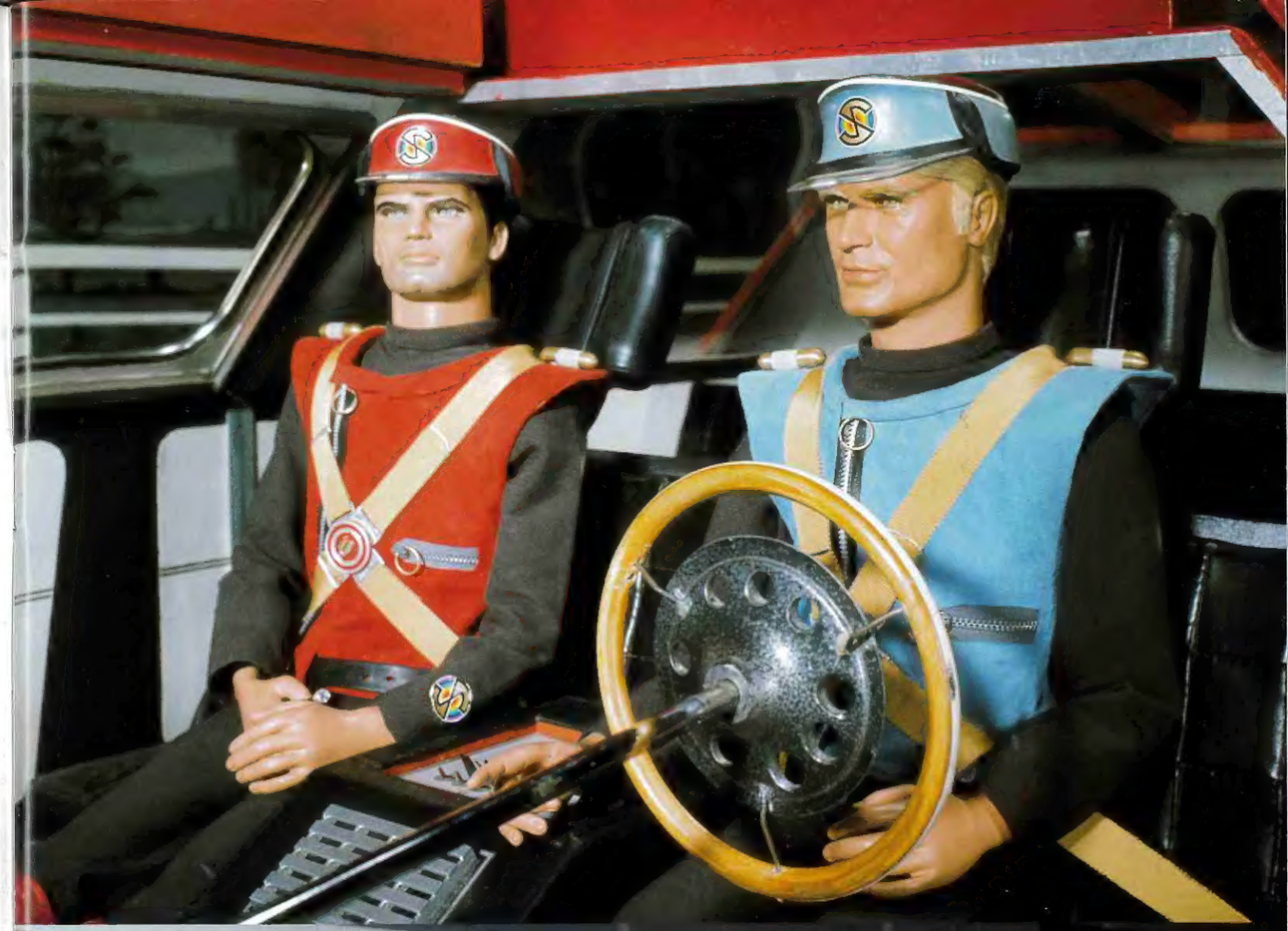
But in terms of the preparation about the characterisations, which is what I think you're getting at there, I think we had a get-together for about two or three days where we'd discuss various aspects. But we had no illusions: it was a one-dimensional thing. It was heroics - no sense trying to imbue them with more than they were. But the first thing you did when you got the script was to leaf through it to see if you died at the end! Of course, Francis Matthews was all right, because he was Captain Scarlet and he's indestructible, right? He just sat there, nice and cool with his script because he knew he was back next week, but the rest of us...! Looking back on that series, I think Captain Blue got a raw deal, because he was very heroic, you know. He was very close to Scarlet, and I pulled him out of some very sticky wickets!

I think it was last year that Francis and I did about seven or eight radio commercials as Blue and Scarlet. I don't see a lot of Francis, but we meet up occasionally. His hair is snow white, we both wear glasses, and it was so funny to see these two old guys, getting their scripts out and there I am saying, "S.I.G., Captain Scarlet," to this white-haired old guy with glasses! It's great to see that.

You're a very experienced radio actor. Was recording Captain Scarlet **essentially like doing radio?**
Oh, yes. I like the medium very much. It doesn't pay a lot of money, but it's a wonderful medium to work in, because you can try so many different things. There's a wonderful thing that BBC Radio

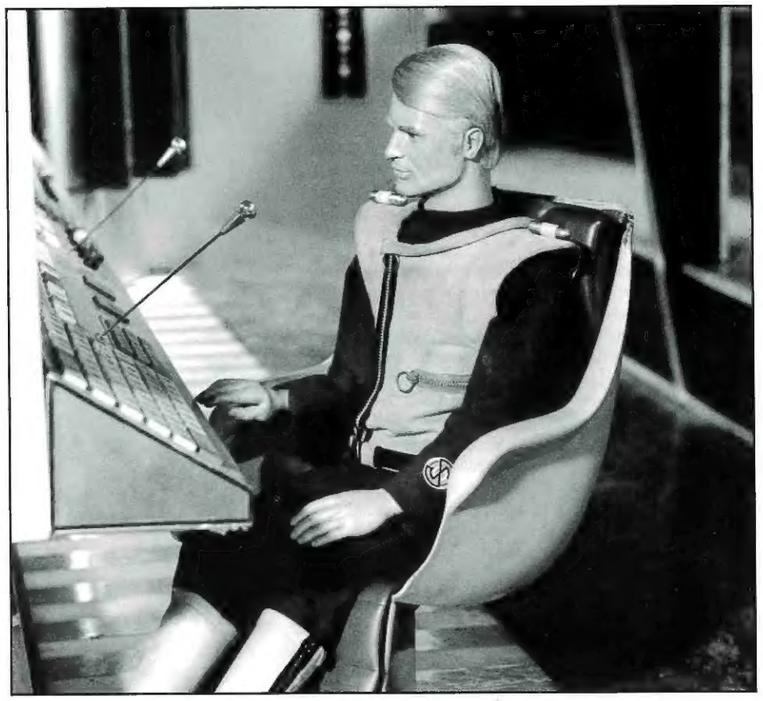
Captain Blue with Captain Scarlet piloting a Spectrum Passenger Jet in **Captain Scarlet And The Mysterons**

Top: Captains Scarlet and Blue in **Captain Scarlet** - *Manhunt* / Bottom: Captain Blue with the World President and Dr. Glaistallo in **Captain Scarlet** - *Spectrum Strikes Back*



Bottom: Captains Blue and Scarlet in **Captain Scarlet** - *Noose Of Ice* / Top: Captain Blue in **Captain Scarlet** - *Special Assignment*

Captain Blue operates the Cloudbase Computer in **Captain Scarlet And The Mysterons** - *Avalanche*



does: you can play a leading part and then next week they'll call you up for a smaller part, and you don't get penalised ("Oh, he only does small parts," or "He only does this,") because you can go across the spectrum in the size of parts. There are lots of bread and butter jobs on radio, from reading extracts on **Kaleidoscope** - if they're doing an American novel I'll go down there and read stuff like that - to short stories and books at bedtime. It's a wonderful discipline.

I saw an interview recently about the Disney animation features, and one of the voice actors was talking about how it was very demanding to act without moving your body, because if your clothes rustled, or your feet sounded on the floor, the tape was ruined. Would it have been like that on Captain Scarlet, **or was the recording not so exacting?**

I think that looking back on it now, we just did them as a standard radio performance, and to go back to this professionalism again, we never had to match anything that the puppets did. If you said a line in a certain way that had, let's say, a smile in your voice, they'd make the puppet smile, which was good because it gave you the freedom to explore things that you could do just with the sound of your voice. Then they would make the puppet fit that.

But with radio, you have to convey everything in the voice. There are lots of little shorthand techniques: for example, when you 'meet' somebody on radio, if you just reach out and shake your hand, that "How do you do" will be somehow registered in your voice. When I started out, I'd watch these old actors who'd done millions of radio shows, like Carlton Hobbes and Frankie Francis, all wonderful people, because before television took over, radio was really prestigious. If you were on a **Saturday Night Theatre** on the BBC, that was like playing the lead in the National Theatre. And I was pleased to be able to work with that generation of actors, because to watch those guys work and listen to them and the subtlety that they could manifest was wonderful. I remember working with a wonderful director: I shrugged my shoulders in a line and he said, "Don't do that, Eddie. Get the shrug in your voice," which is very clever. So it's always a challenge, and it's a mistake to think that you can just walk in, read the words and go away. But I love the medium.

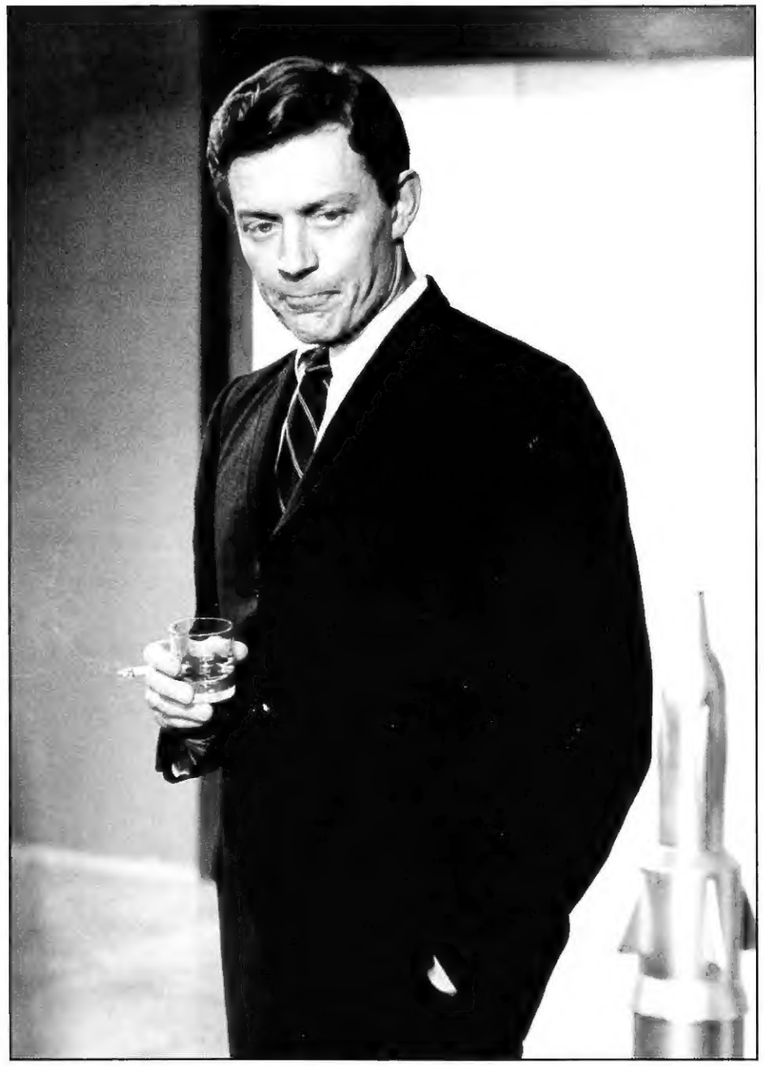
In the Cloudbase Conference Room, Captains Blue and Scarlet are held in place with wood blocks and gaffer tape in **Captain Scarlet And The Mysterons**

One of your co-stars on Captain Scarlet **was the late Donald Gray, who I understand was a bit of a controversial figure.**

Well, yes, Donald was very conservative. I think he played a lot of Majors and Brigadiers in his career and maybe it got to him! But he was an ultra-conservative guy, politically, and actors are mostly a liberal, radical rabble! We had a black actor in the company, Cy Grant, who was doing the voice of Lieutenant Green. Rhodesia had declared UDI (Unilateral Declaration of Independence), and because of apartheid and all the rest, it was very, very tense in those days in the Sixties. One day, Donald drove up in his car and he had this sticker on it saying 'Support Rhodesia' and Cy Grant said, "Hey, Donald, I want to have a word with you about that, man!" So there was a little bit of tension, but that's something that happens very infrequently in the theatre. Donald was a nice man, but he had lost his arm in the war and I think he felt that his career had been curtailed, although he did a series called **Saber of London** which I saw in the States. No pun intended, but he seemed to have a kind of chip on his shoulder and maybe that was it.

But it was an interesting chemical composition, all we actors together on that show, because after a while we would get to argue about our characters and say, "I would never say that!" We'd be told, "Relax, fellers, they're only puppets. Don't get carried away here." But it was a wonderful job, and it's down to the professionalism of Gerry, Sylvia, Reg and all the crew that Gerry had around him at Century 21, and they brought that forward into **Doppelgänger**. It was a very happy experience working on the film, and it was that film that they showed to Lew Grade and some of the magnificos at ITC when they said, "We want to use this guy, Ed Bishop, to play Straker." So I'm very, very grateful to it. Unfortunately, Patrick Wymark is gone now and Ian Hendry too. George Sewell and

NASA liaison David Poulson (Ed Bishop) enjoys a drink in **Doppelgänger**



I came into **UFO** as a result of that film, so I'm looking forward to seeing it for the first time.

You came into the production quite late in the day. Most of your scenes had already been shot with Peter Dyneley as David Poulson.
That's right. I was a cast replacement because Patrick Wymark had a lot of scenes to play with this one character, and Peter Dyneley (who had done the voice for Jeff Tracy in **Thunderbirds**) was playing the part. The guys looked at the rushes and they said, "They're so similar." They were both portly, middle-aged men who looked and sounded very, very similar, so they thought that they would revamp it and just get a younger actor in. They tested me, Shane Rimmer and a couple of other guys, and I just landed they part. I was very lucky.

But again, to show the professionalism of Gerry, Peter Dyneley had worked with him for a long time, and he felt no animosity about it whatsoever. Gerry just said, "Well, look, you're too old, we made a mistake, we're sorry," and Peter said, "Oh well, that's all right, that's showbiz." So there was none of the usual great trauma for an actor when he gets fired, because he was part of the family - that's the way you felt about it.

The director of Doppelgänger **was Robert Parrish, who died in 1995. I understand that he and Gerry didn't get on very well. Gerry said recently that, as far as he is concerned, the film was a very unhappy experience and he was very disappointed with it in the end.**
As far as I was concerned it was a *great* experience. I enjoyed it - I was working; the part wasn't bad and I enjoyed working with Gerry again, but there *were* tensions. I'll say this quite categorically: my feeling is that Gerry exists best and works best in his own atmosphere. I think he found it difficult to go from his atmosphere, which is being surrounded with the directors and the special effects guys and all the rest of the crew, and then having to open it up to do a live-action movie where he got a director with his own ideas imposed upon him by the film company. I think Gerry probably found that a tension. On **UFO** and the other projects that he did, like **Space:1999**, he had his team around him. There's another very famous director, Stanley Kubrick, who also works pretty much to that formula. He gets his own crews around him, and he feels secure in that environment, and I think that's probably the reason Gerry had tension on that picture.

Ed Bishop as Commandant Tom Decker in *Beach Head*, an episode of the BBC science-fiction anthology series **Out Of The Unknown**

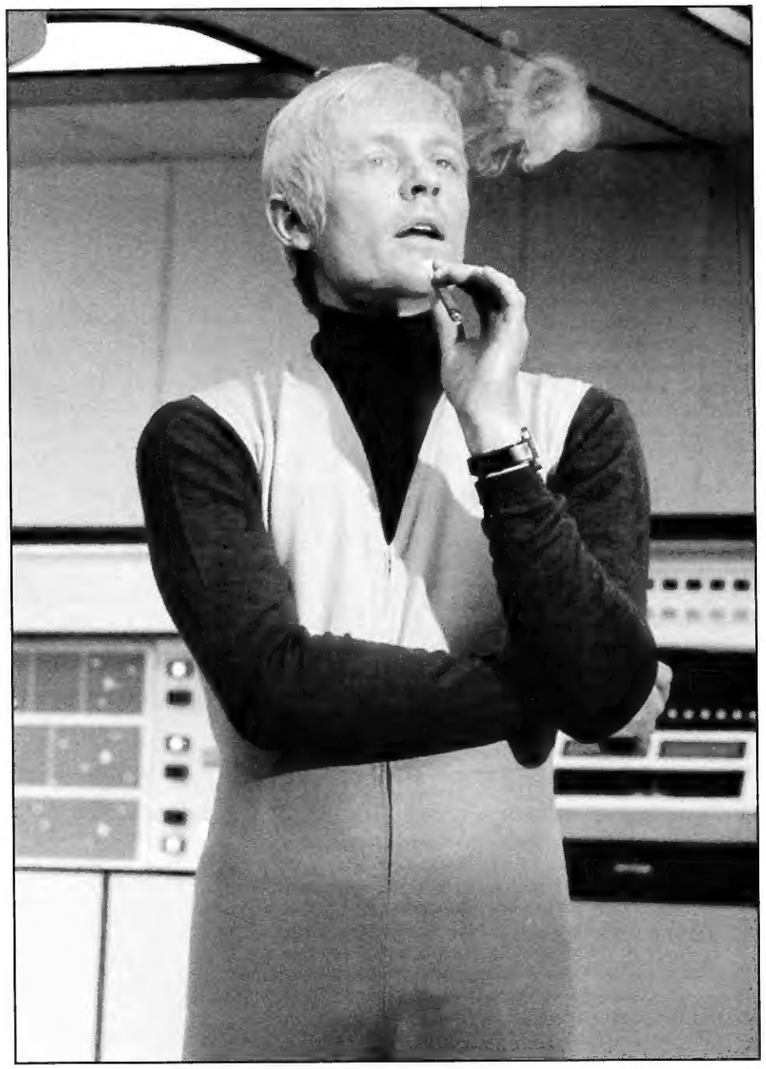
Of course, we also got drunken actors and egotistical actresses on **Doppelgänger**. Those were very heady days at that time in the Sixties - it was just before the big budgets came down and if the star actor was drunk, you shot something else. Nowadays, they don't put up with that nonsense, which I think is right. I've worked with too many drunken actors, and it's a pain in the neck!

I was working on a film called **SOS Titanic** with David Janssen, a charming man. He was an alcoholic and I got to know him quite well. We were shooting up in the Isle of Man where they do the TT races, and they said, "You're off today, Eddie," and I said, "OK, great." Unfortunately, I missed the boat back to the mainland, so I told them, "Well, I'm going to walk all around the island." Apparently, poor David Janssen was too 'ill' to work so they said, "All right, we'll shoot the scene with Bishop and the girl." Somebody said, "Well, he's gone to the mainland... no, wait, he missed the boat!" So they sent a jeep going one way around the island and another jeep going the other way! A guy screeched up to me and shouted, "Ed, get in!" I said, "What's the matter?" He said, "David Janssen can't work. We're going to shoot a scene with you." I said, "How the hell did you know where I was?"

That's how they worked in the movies back then, but that is all over now.

I understand that Gerry got around the problem of Ian Hendry turning up stone drunk one day by shooting the planet surface scene after the crash, where he's basically just lying there.
Yeah. It was very, very sad. Ian and Pat Wymark were very heavy drinkers. Peter Finch was out there at the studio at the time, and Oliver Reed... It was just too much! And I drank too, but I'd get up in the morning, I knew my lines, and I never drank when I was working. But there was a whole different atmosphere during that time. We were filming **UFO** down at MGM Borehamwood and one lunch-time we went down to a bar opposite the studios, and sitting in a corner were Richard Burton and Peter O'Toole getting, you know, 'merry'. Champagne bottles and cronies all around them. They were going to do *Hamlet*. I left, but one of the guys on the crew stayed, and he said that they tossed a coin to see who would play New York and who would play London. They simply got on the phone: "This is Peter O'Toole, I want to do *Hamlet*. Set it up." And he did it. He did it in New York and Richard Burton did it in London. That's the power that the stars had at that time. But that's all changed. Boy, you're into Perrier water and jogging - that's what they do now!

SHADO Commander Ed Straker (Ed Bishop) enjoys a cigar in **UFO** - *Identified*



You mentioned working with George Sewell on Doppelgänger. **Had you worked with him before, or was that your first meeting?**
No. One of the things I consider to be a great accomplishment in my career was working with Joan Littlewood, the wonderful English director of Theatre Workshop at Stratford East. I had a big success with her in this play about J.F. Kennedy, *MacBird*. Well, Georgie Sewell was an old Joan Littlewood actor. She cast her plays from among the local characters up at the East End around the Theatre Royal, and she was a friend of the Krays and all the rest of it. Working up there was a wonderful experience and Georgie Sewell was always around. Although I didn't work with him, he would drop into the theatre so I kind of knew him before we worked together. The absolute essence of Joan Littlewood's theatre was that the actors kind of made it up, and with all the big hits that she had - *Oh What A Lovely War*, *Mrs. Wilson's Diary* and *Sparrows Can't Sing* - she would work with the actors and all the dialogue would be improvised. It was great fun.

There was a wonderful scene that we did in **Doppelgänger**. I don't think I'm giving away any surprises to say that Herbert Lom's character had an artificial eye, and it was a camera. He would take pictures of the secret plans and George Sewell's character killed him because he was with the bad guys. So we had this scene that took thirty-seven takes to get right. Now, I'm standing here at a bar, the camera's over there at the edge of the bar looking into a tumbler, and I have the glass eye in my hand. On "Action" I had to roll that eye out into the tumbler and it had to land looking right into the lens of the camera. Now, how the hell are you going to do that? It's just luck, because in nine or ten takes it missed altogether, or it was right where it should be, but the eye was looking off the other way! I had the first line of dialogue and I didn't know whether we were going to go on. If I heard the guy pull focus on the camera, I knew we were going to play the scene. Thirty-seven takes... God!

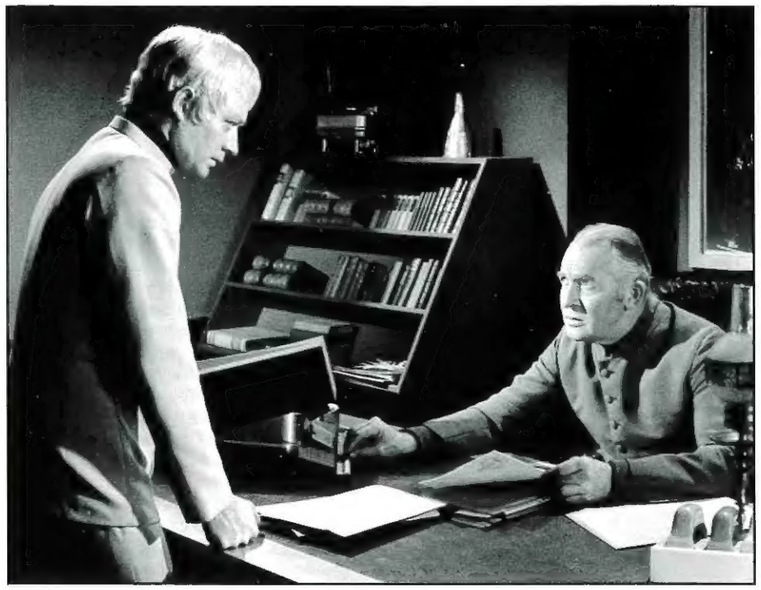
So we shot that part of it, and Pat Wymark was there. Bob Parrish didn't have an ending for the scene, because it finished kind of flat, so Wymark said, "Why don't I just walk around the bar on my own, ruminating..." which is wonderful, because the camera just follows him. Actors are notoriously selfish when there's a camera around! So as the camera went by with him ruminating, Bob said to George and I, "As the camera goes by, you guys say just a couple of lines, just sort of in the background, you know." To a couple of old Joan Littlewood actors, that was a very dangerous thing to say! So as Wymark walked by on this rehearsal, I held up the eye and I said to George, "Does our side have anything like this?" and he took the eye and said, "We do now." Parrish said, "That's great, that's great! Pat, you just keep walking out of frame and I'll end on the boys here!" Pat said, "Grrrrrrr!" But that's the kind of stuff that happens.

Yeah, that was great fun. As I say, I have an affection for the picture because they showed the footage of me in that to Lew Grade and those guys for the **UFO** series, so I'm very, very affectionate towards that.

There were quite a lot of your fellow UFO **cast members who appeared in** Doppelgänger: **Vladek Sheybal, Keith Alexander, Norma Ronald, Jeremy Wilkin... It's almost as if the film was a cast try-out for** UFO. **Do you think that was in their minds, or did the idea for** UFO **come later?**
I really don't know how advanced Gerry's thinking was, because it wasn't all that long after **Doppelgänger** that we did **UFO**. Gerry had a very fertile imagination, and he and Sylvia were always cooking projects. Maybe they were thinking of a sci-fi series, but precisely whether he had it at that time, I don't know.

It is quite apparent from the earliest scripts for UFO **that you were Ed Straker right from the beginning, and the part was written for you.**

Ed Bishop as Commander Ed Straker in *Timelash*, an episode from the second production block of **UFO**



Straker (Ed Bishop) clashes with General Henderson (Grant Taylor) in **UFO** - *Court Martial*

Were you aware of anybody else being looked at for the role?
No, I don't think that they looked at anybody else for that part. They said, "We're going to shoot them on ten day schedules," and, "Well, Ed will be needed about three days out of that." But Tony and the writers liked the character, so he began to get more and more and more, so at the end I was working every day. The character kind of took over. But I must say I did enjoy it very much.

Originally on UFO **you were to have a co-star by the name of Franco Derosa, an Italian actor, who was going to play the Moonbase commander. I understand that Gerry filmed about three or four days with him on the Moonbase set and then he was let go. Did you ever meet him?**
Yes, I met him. I had no scenes with him, but I heard all these horror stories that he was just totally inexperienced, he couldn't remember his lines and couldn't hit a mark. It was a good idea, because he looked terrific, but on such a tight schedule you couldn't afford any fat like that. Everybody had to be on the ball, know their stuff and get on with it, but Franco was too inexperienced. It was a shame. And then Peter Gordeno left, because he had some commitments to honour, but they weren't worried about me, the old fart, old reliable, old Yellowstone, because they knew I could remember lines. Sit me there behind the desk - that was the concept for Straker. He was going to be sitting there hard-assing everybody.

Sylvia especially was looking for a 'younger man', to make a discovery, and she had an awful lot of good-looking young men there, but they didn't have a lot of experience, so I think maybe the character of Straker kind of took over because of that.

They brought in Michael Billington, basically to replace Derosa. Do you think it was a good move to bring him in, or do you feel that it took something away from George?
Yes, George's character got kind of marginalised, because he started out in the first couple of episodes as a kind of romantic, kidding person. And I don't know whether Sylvia thought that she would take him into a romantic mode, but George wasn't very happy with that. I think that they then wanted to go with a more conventionally accepted glamourous thing, so there were little readjustments, one or two little tweaks.

You read books on the making of **Star Trek** and all the back-room work that the Americans do to develop things, so when they bring in the actors, that's the last piece of the jigsaw and they've got it all worked out. But I think that if I would make a criticism of **UFO**, I would say that they didn't do a lot of pre-planning and there was a lot of making it up as we went along.

But something worked because the BBC is showing them again and they're on satellite, and it's still popular after all this time. I've even been contacted by a production company in Australia - they're negotiating now for the rights to make **UFO 2**! So it's going to be Straker in a Zimmer frame! I thought it was somebody from **Candid Camera**. The guy called me up and said, "I'm from Australia. I wondered, would you be interested in coming out and playing Straker in a reprise of the **UFO** series?" so I said, "Sure, why not!" Watch this space!

UFO **wasn't afraid to make what were, at the time, quite controversial stances on various issues - feminism, racism, drugs. I think one of Straker's most powerful speeches in the series is where he tells the black pilot Mark Bradley that it's his ability to do the job that matters, rather than anything to do with his colour. Were you aware at the time of the ground-breaking nature of that, and also of having women in positions of authority?**
No, I don't think we were aware of anything like that, but at that time in the late Sixties and early Seventies, there was a lot of racial tension in America, and to even touch on that was a brave step for the scriptwriters.

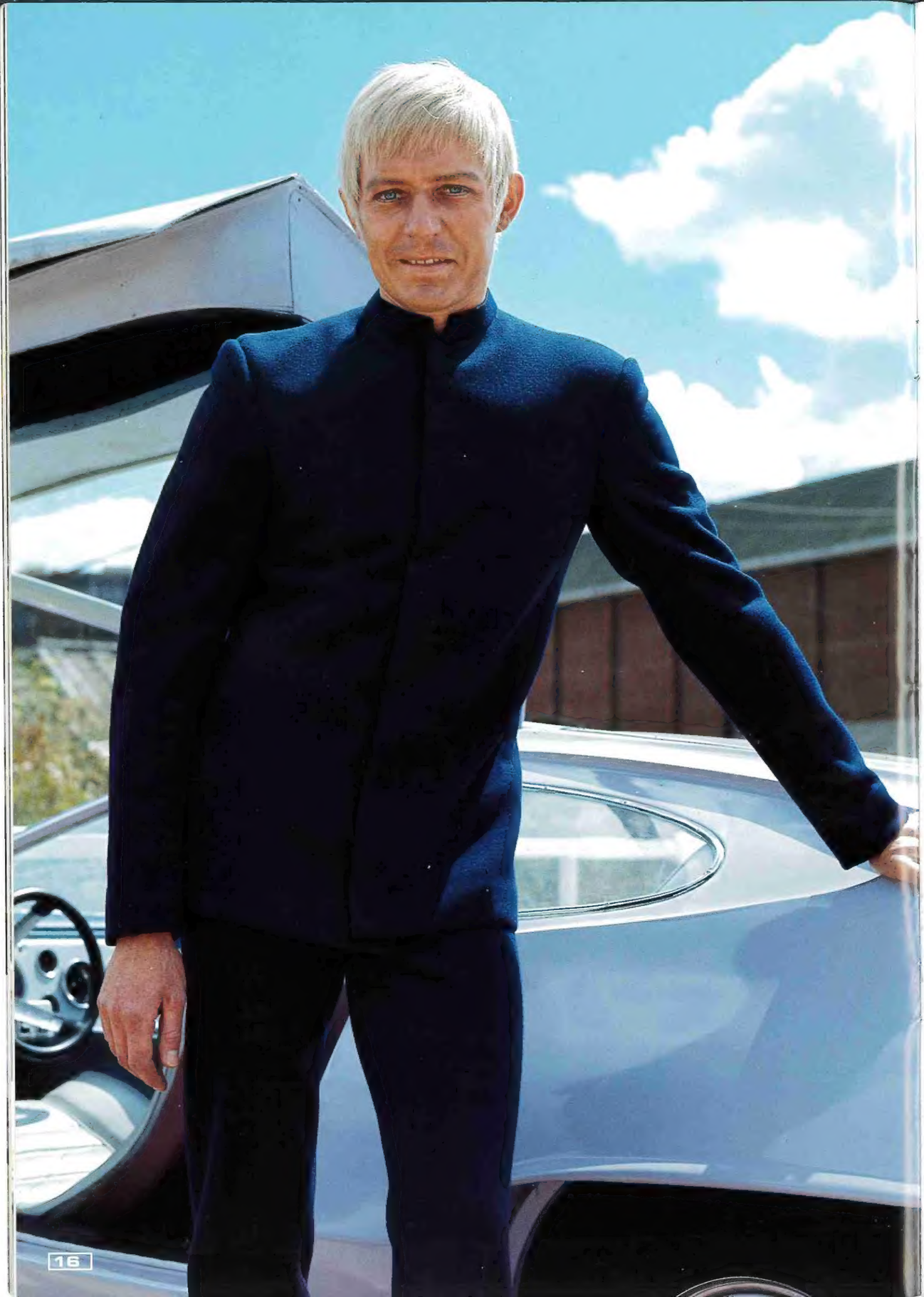
I must say that I myself personally claim the credit for bringing in Wanda Ventham as Straker's number two, because they were looking at a lot of different actors when Georgie Sewell left, and I don't know whether I was just afraid of them bringing in another actor who would maybe compete with me - there's probably a portion of that - but I just felt somehow instinctively that we should get a woman. I had three daughters at that time, my wife had been to university, and attitudes towards women were kind of changing, so I put in that idea. I didn't suggest Wanda *per se*, but I did suggest and push that they consider a woman, and I'm glad to say they picked up on it and brought Wanda into the picture. I really did enjoy working with her.

Looking back at it, there was no sexual tension between Straker and Colonel Lake - they were just good friends. I always think of it as like Laurel and Hardy, sitting up in bed together: even in this permissive age, there's never any smattering of any kind of relationship other than that which you see on the screen. It's a pure cinematographic theatrical event that you accept totally. I mean, I've never read anybody writing a treatise on the latent homosexuality of Laurel and

Straker (Ed Bishop) questions Lieutenant Nina Barry (Dolores Mantez) about Conroy in **UFO** - *Mindbender*

Commander Ed Straker (Ed Bishop) and Colonel Alec Freeman (George Sewell) at SHADO HQ in **UFO** - *Exposed*

Commander Ed Straker (Ed Bishop) and Colonel Virginia Lake (Wanda Ventham) in Sarah Bosanquet's apartment in **UFO** - *Destruction*



Hardy! It just didn't exist. With **UFO**, there was just some magic or other between Wanda and I. We just achieved that chemistry but the sexual thing just never came up, although she was a beautiful woman. I was younger then, so a sexual relationship between the characters could have been possible, but I think it worked well as we played it.

The first seventeen episodes of UFO **were shot at MGM in Borehamwood, but then the studio was closed at the end of 1969 and you moved over to Pinewood for the last nine episodes. Aside from the fact that George wasn't there and Wanda was, were there any other discernible differences in the atmosphere between the episodes?**

Oh, yes, absolutely. That was a big turn of the wrench, and I think that if Gerry and Sylvia had done what they did earlier, we would probably still be making them, because we came very, very close to renewing. CBS wanted to pick up their option. We came to within a whisker of making another 26 episodes, and I think if we had made the second 26, they would have been much more successful in the mainstream rather than just for connoisseurs.

They simply cut the shooting time from ten days to nine, which meant that we had to work even harder and faster. They got a lot of different directors, who are what they call 'hack' directors. These guys were series directors, and they could make these half-hour and hour series. They'd work on **Man In A Suitcase**, **The Saint**, **The Baron** and all these popular series which ITC was making at that time, and those guys could look at two or three pages of dialogue and shoot it in such a way that all the editor had to do was join the ends together and it worked - people like Jeremy Summers, Cyril Frankel, and Dave Tomblin, who is now one of the biggest first assistants in the world. They were wonderful directors, and they didn't indulge we actors so much. The other boys, Ken Turner, Alan Perry and Dave Lane, they were wonderful guys, but if you said, "Hey, how about a shot of me just thinking?" they'd say, "Yeah, that's good," but the other guys would say, "No, let's get on with it - move it, move it, move it!" And that was a much better formula for the series - it cut out all the fat. In some of those early ones, the audience is there before the actor is, and that's bad news. When the audience has worked it out before the guy on the screen, you're in big trouble.

Of course, one of the most stylish aspects of UFO**, that kind of set the tone for the series, was the costume design. As someone who had to wear those suits, what did you think of them?**

I was 100% for them. I trusted Sylvia Anderson implicitly, because her sense of colour and style was absolutely impeccable. She had the whole visual concept for the character: the hair, the colour and everything. I think it was very successful, because for a lot of people, the one thing that they remember about the series is the visual impact of it.

We had recurring extras who were in more or less every episode, and Sylvia would hand-pick these girls and young men, the operatives in the back and all the rest of it. It was her contribution in that which was enormous. If she said I looked good in something, I believed it. I would do it without question.

I never forget when we went to a fitting once for a costume down in London, and I was wearing a bow tie. She said, "Ed, take off that tie and let me buy you a necktie," and I said, "Oh, sure, OK." And she said, "Don't *ever* let me see you wearing *that* bow-tie again!" She had wonderful taste and you just trusted her.

It was like Derek Meddings - if he said the best way to do this special effect was this way, you did it. There was no question about it.

What were the cars like to drive?

They were an absolute nightmare! As soon as you saw a sequence in a car, your heart sank, because the gull-wing doors only ever worked when there was a prop man just out of shot lifting them up. You never see it absolutely clear - there's always a little bit you don't see on the screen, and that's Fred or Bert down there. They had no ventilation. They would mount the camera in there and it was a very closed-in set. No, I didn't like working on the cars at all.

I very foolishly got banned from driving as a result of a drink-driving conviction, and I was driving the car around on the road, when a guy in the crew came up to me and said, "You know, Ed, you gotta be careful driving these cars on the Queen's Highway." And I said, "Why?" "Well," he said, "You know you're banned." I said, "Yeah, but this isn't really driving." He says, "You tell the cops that!" I said, "My God, I didn't think about that - I'm driving a car on the Queen's Highway!" You get into costume and make-up, and you get divorced from reality. So I went to the production manager, Norman Foster, and I told him, "Man, I can't touch another car! That's it." So when we did cars, they unfortunately had to go to the additional expense of putting the car on a trailer, and then it would be pulled along behind the camera car - and all because I was stupid enough to go out and have a couple of pints over the limit.

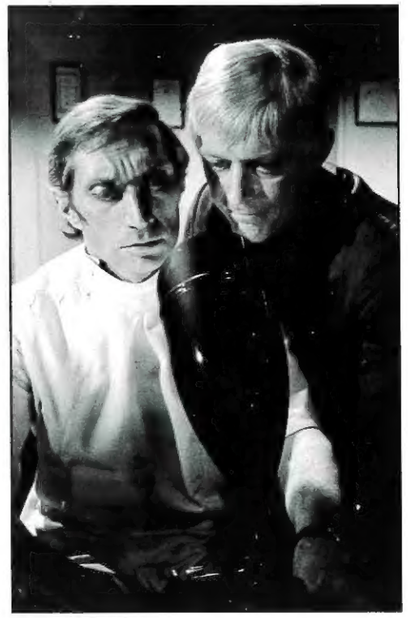
But the cars were always a bit of a drag, they really were. It was just no fun in there. And that travelling drum that you saw when they shot in the studio, that was even worse to work with, because things were always going wrong with it. The other cars that we drove, like when we used Reg Hill's Jensen (in *Confetti Check A-O.K.*) - that was a pleasure. But those plastic cars, they were just shells dropped on a Ford Cortina chassis, and the exhaust didn't work. No, they weren't any fun.

Every fan has their own favourite and least favourite episodes of UFO**, but which are the ones that are the most memorable for you?**

Well, I think the favourite ones would have to be the one or two that I did with Suzanne Neve, when it was Straker in flashback (*Confetti Check A-O.K.*), and the situation with his son (*A Question Of Priorities*), because actors would prefer to get involved with inter-relationships, rather than gadgetry.

I also liked *Sub-Smash*. We had a lot of controversy on that. Straker thought he was going to die - he's in the submarine and he told Foster to get off the boat, because he was the only guy who could get away or something like that. So he's making this entry into the diary and I took a little verse from the burial at sea. I said, "We therefore commit ourselves to the deep," - a little schmaltzy, but it's very moving. Now, when I started to work on the series, I promised myself that I would never try to give a performance where I knew the end of the script, because otherwise that was dull. It was like **Captain Scarlet** - Francis always knew he was back next week, but it was more fun to say, "Jesus, this might be it!" Well, everybody in the crew was divided over this line, because in a family everybody expresses their opinions, and some said, "Oh, it's schmaltzy sentimentality," but I thought it was kind of interesting: here's this guy, with all this power, all this authority and all this omnipotence, with all this secretiveness, and yet at a time when he's close to death, he thinks about something that's very simple. I thought that contrapuntal thing was an interesting facet. I would find that interesting about a guy like that if I saw it on-screen.

Least favourite? I don't know, I suppose it would be some of that MGM stock that we did.



There were some that depended a lot on gadgetry. *Close Up*, that was one. But it's very hard for me to pick one that I didn't like or one that I liked the best.

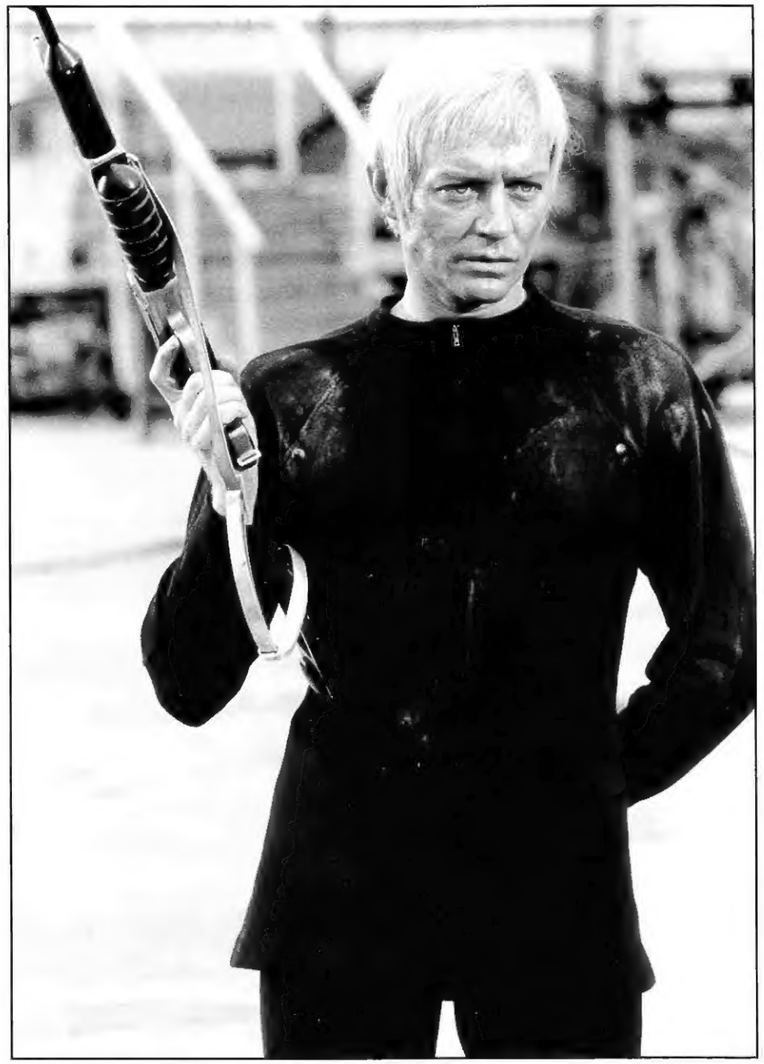
Talking about *Sub-Smash*, I understand that you really do suffer from claustrophobia.

Yes, I do suffer very badly from claustrophobia, but not anywhere near as badly as Dolores (Mantez). She was really in a terrible state. She had to crawl through that tube, which is bad news. She was really on the edge about that. But they had actually written that because of my personal claustrophobia, although I didn't find the set oppressive in any way.

It's bothered me a couple of times in films though. Unfortunately it's academic, because it was cut out of the film, but in **2001: A Space Odyssey** I was the pilot of this spaceship, and there was a wonderful scene where this elevator opens and I step out. But before waiting for the

Left: Ed Bishop as Commander Ed Straker on the Pinewood Studios lot during the filming of **UFO**'s second production block

Above: Straker (Ed Bishop) asks Dr. Jackson (Vladek Sheybal) if he has anything for a Size A problem, deluxe version, in **UFO** - *The Psychobombs*



Straker (Ed Bishop) brandishes a rifle during his pursuit of Turner in **UFO** - *Timelash*

shot to start, I was really getting panicky. There was nothing Mickey Mouse about Kubrick's set - every single thing worked, and this thing actually locked. I didn't get out until some guy pressed a button, so it was like being in a real elevator - you don't get out until the mechanism lets you out - so I was really getting quite bad on that.

And then I had to play this wonderful scene with this guy. I had to talk to him because there was only one passenger going up to Flavius and I had to find out what the score was. There was a scene between me and the co-pilot, and he'd say, "Hey, what the hell's going on? Why are we going up with one passenger?" I'd say, "I'll try to find out." All of that was cut out of the picture. Broke my heart. And we had a scene with Bill Sylvester sitting there eating his supper, and then suddenly he takes his hands away, and all the food starts to float up. Unfortunately that was all cut. Then we had a couple of scenes with the stewardess who walks upside-down, it was great fun. But Kubrick shot nine hours worth of material and the final picture's three, so somewhere there's a good picture floating around about this spaceship pilot!

After UFO, **you came back to work for Gerry on** The Protectors. **You did one episode, *The First Circle*, which seems to be generally hailed as the best episode of the series.**
I certainly enjoyed working on that.

It looks as though it was a difficult episode to film: a two-hander between yourself and Bob Vaughn, all shot on location in a deserted air-base, and it looks as though it was throwing it down with rain all the time.
Yes, it was raining, I remember. Tony Barwick wrote that episode for what he thought I could handle best, which was this kind of frantic, neurotic kind of behaviour, but I enjoyed that enormously. It had a wonderful director, Don Chaffey, and it was nice to work with Bob Vaughn and get to know him, so it was a very nice experience. It had a lot to say about the Vietnam war, because, of course, it was still going on at that time and my character was traumatised by that war. As much as you can in a popular entertainment series like **The Protectors**, it made a nice little oblique comment, which I think is always good if you can sneak in a little dimension to a project like that. Yes, I enjoyed that enormously.

I must tell you a quick anecdote about Bob Vaughn who is an awfully charming man. Some years after that, I worked on a film called **Brass Target**. All of we actors assembled in the studio in Munich and there was George Kennedy, John Cassevetes, Bob Vaughn, Edward Herrmann, all these stars. Now, I like doing military pictures, because you never have to worry about your costume - if you are wearing the right suit or anything - because you know that if you're a Colonel, you're just wearing a Colonel's uniform, and that's it. No problem.

Well, for some reason, no matter how big actors are, they always like to impress other actors. I don't know why that is, because other actors don't employ other actors - I mean, if you want to try to impress a producer, OK. So all these guys are sitting around, talking about "My last film" and "My last Broadway play" - there's a lot of money floating around - and all of a sudden, into this room comes this huge German woman. She looked like something out of Valhalla, the Valkyries. She had these golden hair braids tied on her head and she said, "All right! All you men, you vill now go to your racks and you vill pick off your uniforms!" They had racks of costumes labelled up as Rome, Los Angeles, London, all the different locations where you live, so you went to your rack and you got your uniform. Well, you never saw so many guys suddenly get their pants down, all these big-shot actors! And this woman, who had a terrifying voice, said, "Who is Robert Vaughn?" And Bob said, "Er, that's me." She said, "Mr. Vaughn, I have here now for you the things your agent asked me to give you." And she produced a pair of lifts, to go inside his shoes! About as subtle as a fart in church! The poor guy - he's a millionaire and a big star, and he turned crimson, absolutely crimson. And the funny thing is, nobody laughed, because we were so terrified of that woman. What would she say to us if we laughed? I never forgot that experience.

You have appeared in two of the James Bond films, You Only Live Twice **and** Diamonds Are Forever. **What was it like to work on those?**
Wonderful. Absolutely, fantastically wonderful,

Ed Bishop guest stars as the disturbed Colonel John Hunter in **The Protectors** - *The First Circle*

Another military role for Ed Bishop, as Colonel Stewart in **Brass Target** (1978)

because on the earlier ones, the cost of the film was irrelevant. We had a guy on **UFO**, Basil Newell, who did our make-up. Every morning, I would go into his room and I would see this great big mattress of foam rubber that he had up on his shelf. I finally asked him, "Basil, what is that mattress?" He said, "Oh, no, that's not a mattress." He had worked on all the Bond pictures, doing Connery's make-up. He said that one day he went to the production manager and said that he needed some sponge for his make-up. Now, a make-up sponge is a very small thing, but the way they thought... get him a mattress! He had a lifetime supply of these things!

You work on pictures where you're thinking all the time about the budget and you've got to get the shot in three takes, but with Bond you had a wonderful feeling about it: that if something went wrong, they'd always go again. So it was a good adventure. I worked with Sean Connery on **Diamonds Are Forever** and he was a wonderful man. It was a great pleasure to work with him on that.

Patrick Allen, who did an episode of **UFO** with us, worked on one of the Bond pictures and he told me all about it. He had a very good part and they shot in Japan. When they came back to Pinewood and they were finishing off, apparently somebody said to Mr. Broccoli and Mr. Saltzman, the producers, "You know, it's too bad when we were in Japan, we didn't film those man-eating crabs." And they said, "What? Man-eating crabs?" This guy said, "Yeah, they got these big crabs and they attack living animals! Most crabs wait until the animal's dead, and they're like nature's Hoovers - they sweep up the garbage - but these attack you!" So Broccoli said, "My God, we gotta get them over here!"

So they hired an aeroplane to bring over a tank-full of about a hundred of these crabs, and they wrote some sequence where Sean fell into a vat or something with all these crabs. But nobody told them that these cotton-picking crabs were nocturnal and they only did whatever it was they did in the pitch-black - and it's very, very difficult to film anything, even a man-eating crab, when it's pitch-black! Apparently, as soon as they saw light, they just went limp and they were out of action. They tried to get some sequence together: they put out the lights and all the 150 men on the crew were sitting around waiting for the crabs to get active. Then they'd go, "Right, lights!" and they'd put the camera on, but as soon as they did, the crabs would stop dead! So Broccoli said, "All right, we'll fix the bastards. We're going to have a crab-meat buffet! If they won't work in the light, they'll work in the boiling water!" But the RSPCA said, "No, no. No can do. You brought these crabs over as actors. You can't eat them!" So they had to go to the expense of putting them back on the 'plane in the tank and sending them back to Japan. That was the kind of atmosphere in those heady days, when money meant nothing.

Now, Michael Billington and I went to a convention in Los Angeles last summer. I hadn't seen Mike in fifteen or twenty years and we had the most enjoyable transatlantic trip from Heathrow to LA. He told me a lot of these stories about Bond and I got on my knees to beg him to write a book, because he was tested to play Bond *seven* times! I didn't know that. It was incredible. And he never got it! But he was a personal friend of Cubby Broccoli's, because he had a romantic attachment with his daughter and they lived together in LA for about five or six years. When we were out in Los Angeles attending this convention, he went to visit Mr. Broccoli who was in his Eighties, and when he came back I said, "Mike, did you ever ask the man why you never got cast as Bond?" And he said, "No, I never asked him." I just couldn't understand that. Somebody must be able to say, "Well, Mike, we thought you were..." you know... something. There would be some reason. But he never asked him and Broccoli never volunteered it. But to be tested for a major part like that seven times, and not get it...! I think Michael really would have been wonderful, because this was just after **UFO**. Apparently, it came down to within a hair's breadth between him and Roger Moore, but they had been so badly stung with George Lazenby, who was a relative unknown, that they decided to go with Roger, who was a known quantity. But Mike was within a whisper of getting that part.

He got into The Spy Who Loved Me. **He played a Russian agent and got shot by Roger Moore right at the beginning.**
But he was always around the picture, because when they were looking for Bond girls, he would go in and play Bond for the screen test with them. He'd be in LA and they'd fly him over to Paris first-class, put him up in a hotel... it's really rough, isn't it? But I begged him to find the time to write it all down, because it's a wonderful phenomenon. Those days will never come back again.

You were briefly involved with Gerry's most recent series Space Precinct. **I wondered how you thought it compared with** UFO **and Gerry's earlier work?**
I haven't seen an episode. I don't know why that is - it's on at the wrong time of day for me or something. But I did the voice-over on the promotional trailer for him. They made a short film of the series to take to America to sell. This trailer ran for about five minutes, so I saw quite a bit of it. I thought it looked interesting, but it did get very mixed notices. I keep hearing conflicting stories as to whether they're going to go on making more or not.

I saw Gerry about a month ago. We were being interviewed for French television, because they're showing **UFO** out there, and I thought Gerry was wonderfully game to come out, because he no longer has any responsibility for **UFO**. He sold it off to other people. They asked him if he would mind saying something in French to these people - *'Je suis Gerry Anderson, magnifique...'* you know, some little phrase - and he had a real hard time doing it. He really tried on camera, it must have been shot after shot after shot. He had enough clout to say, "I'm sorry, I can't do it. Would you just cut?" and walk away. But he really, really tried, and I admired him for that.

Throughout your career, you have been cast in roles of authority, playing Majors and Colonels, rich executives, TV producers, managers and agents. Do you feel as though you have been typecast in your career as these 'men of authority', or have you taken on enough of a variety in other roles that you don't really think about it in those terms?
Well, I've done a lot of fringe plays over pubs. I've done some really bizarre, off-the-wall plays. I emptied the Latchmere Theatre in Bayswater doing a play by an obscure East-European playwright. So, I'm adventurous and I'll put my hand to anything. I've played at the National Theatre, in the West End, and all over. But in terms of the visual thing, films and television... yes, I guess that's down to my 'WASP' background and the chemistry that you bring to a part, but what you look like may not be necessarily what you feel in yourself.

I once worked with a wonderful old actor, Eddie Albert. I was in Norway for about five weeks with him. He'd always played these kind of right-wing, Conservative Americans and I'm very much Left politically, so I met him with some trepidation. Reagan had just been re-elected and I said to him, "I suppose you're pleased that the Republican Reagan has got back in." He thought for a minute and said, "No, no, he's terrible, he's terrible! He's a lousy President!" I felt a little bit relieved, because he was a very Liberal, Left-wing guy. But he had been black-listed in the film industry back in the Fifties because he spoke out about 'fairness for this country' or 'that country' and so on, and the authorities were very nervous, with McCarthyism and all that. Fortunately, he and his wife were a song-and-dance team, so he could go and make a living in night-clubs in New York or wherever. So the persona of the person that you sometimes portray is not always what you are in yourself, as an actor.

One of the reasons I got along with Mike Billington very well is that he was very ambitious, and I applaud that. But I've been very lazy in my career. I've never had any kind of plan to it at all. As long as the phone rang and I was making a living, I never worried about anything. If they cast me in similar parts, I never said to myself, "Wow, I've got to get out of this mould." I'll play all the Generals and rich executives and captains of industry they want. As long as you're in demand, and your craft is sought after, why should I try to tamper with that? ●

Countdown

The Space Age Comic!

Countdown is often viewed by older Anderson fans as the poor-man's _TV Century 21_ - a usurper to the throne of Anderson comicdom. To the next generation it was the best thing since _Pippin_. Chris Bentley charts the short-lived history of the comic that featured more Gerry Anderson shows than any other.

The first and foremost comics magazine for Gerry Anderson fans has to be *TV Century 21* which ran for 347 issues (through a variety of incarnations) from 1965 before merging with *Valiant* in 1971. *TV Century 21* set the standard for British comics magazines in the Sixties and Seventies and has rarely been equalled or surpassed, but one magazine that came close was *TV Century 21*'s successor, *Countdown*. The story of *TV Century 21* has been well-chronicled elsewhere, but *Countdown* is often forgotten or ignored by Anderson journalists and fans alike, an unfair slight for the magazine that featured the only English-language comic strip appearances of **The Secret Service**, **UFO** and **The Protectors**.

Countdown was the brainchild of former *TV Century 21* art editor Dennis Hooper, who recognised the growing potential of the Anderson series and science-fiction in general in the early Seventies. In 1971, repeats of the various Anderson shows were still very popular and Anderson's new live-action series **UFO**, which had premiered the previous September, was generating a great deal of interest. The last of the Anderson series comic strips, **Thunderbirds**, had been abandoned by *TV Century 21* (or rather *TV21* as it had become) in June 1970, so the entire Anderson back catalogue was readily available for Hooper to use in *Countdown*. These were supported by **Doctor Who** - which had also achieved a new lease of life on television with the popular casting of Jon Pertwee in the title role - and, for comic relief Hanna-Barbera's *Dastardly And Muttley* adapted from the **Wacky Races** spin-off series **Dastardly And Muttley In Their Flying Machines**.

Countdown number 1 burst onto the newsstands on Thursday, 18th February 1971. With a cover price of just 5p, the comic was published by Polystyle and printed in quality photogravure by Sun Printers Ltd. in Watford, who also printed *TV Times* and the *Sunday Times* supplement. With so much material to choose from, it was impossible for Hooper to fit all of the Anderson shows into each 24 page issue, but his plan was explained to readers on the first editorial page. Next to a 'floating head' photo of Anderson himself (unusual in itself as most readers had no idea who he was), the text read:

"How can you possibly get all of Gerry Anderson's wonderful film series into one comic? Not very easily. That's why COUNTDOWN is going to spread them over many issues. Week by week, you'll be able to follow the adventures of Stingray, Lady Penelope, Joe 90, Captain Scarlet, Thunderbirds, Secret Service, Fireball XL5 and his latest and greatest - UFO."

This Hooper did, for only **UFO**, **Thunderbirds** and **Captain Scarlet** appeared in that first issue alongside the aforementioned **Doctor Who** (as *Dr. Who*) and *Dastardly And Muttley* strips. The other series all made their appearances later on as strips were periodically 'rested' to make way for them. While the ongoing serialised strips each took a spread of two pages, a feature of each issue was a five or six page complete story ('Countdown Complete'), the content of which rotated through the different Anderson shows.

It was clear from the off that the primary strip in *Countdown* was **UFO** and the series was given the highest profile in the magazine. The first issue not only featured **UFO** prominently on the cover but also introduced the series in a five page monochrome strip illustrated by Jon Davis. The full colour centre spread was a pull-out poster revealing 'The Secrets Of SHADO' in 21 captioned photos, Robin Hilburn examined real-life U.F.O. sightings in 'Do Flying Saucers Exist?' (an ongoing feature), and there was even a **UFO** battleships-style game called 'Seek And Destroy'. In subsequent issues, the **UFO** strip took one of the three colour spreads in the comic with artwork by Gerry Haylock, and full-page profiles of the series' stars began to appear from issue four.

Thunderbirds began with 'The New System' a two-page black and white strip drawn by Don Harley continuing over the next four issues, while **Captain Scarlet** started as a two-page black and white strip drawn by John Cooper which dropped to a single page from issue two. Both strips went 'back-to-basics' to regain the flavour of their parent TV shows after the fantastical excesses of the later *TV21* strips. The **Captain Scarlet** strip even went to the trouble of explaining the format of the series by re-presenting events from the series' pilot episode *The Mysterons*, although Davis erred in his depiction of the Mysteron Complex and a flying MEV attacking it. The text also described the events as taking place in "the first half of the twenty-first century".

Thunderbirds continued to be drawn by Don Harley until issue 23, with a mixture of serial stories and 'Countdown Complete' stories which missed only issue 7. While not in the calibre of Frank Bellamy's **Thunderbirds** art for *TV Century 21*, Harley's art was more accurate to the television series and resulted in a number of very fine stories: a four-part tale starting in issue 15 featured a political prisoner cornered in a vast rubbish heap by giant mutant rats, and this was followed by a five-part story with Brains trapped on the sea-bed beneath the Arctic icecap in a prototype chain-reactor tunnel digger.

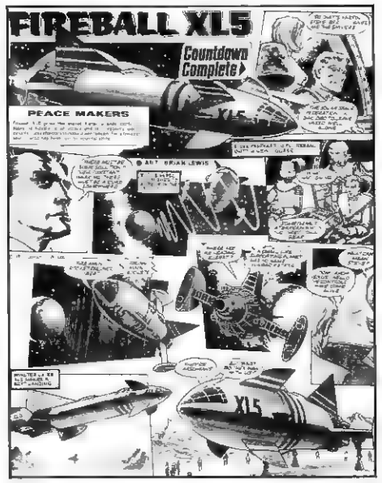
After its initial serial story, the **Captain Scarlet** strip appeared only in a series of seven 'Countdown Complete' stories illustrated by Malcolm Stokes Brian Lewis, Martin Asbury and Keith Watson. The story quality was as variable as the art although Brian Lewis' two contributions were noteworthy: in the first (issue 15) the Mysterons reanimate WW2 kamikaze fighters to attack world leaders at a conference on Fan Son Island, and in the second (issue 35) Scarlet has to enter an active volcano to recover a time bomb. The best of the crop, however, was the Keith Watson strip in issue 32, 'Return Of The Rock Snakes' in which Captain Black returns from Mars with Rock Snake eggs which soon hatch out and menace a bacterial development centre. Connecting the Anderson series together in a unified Anderson universe was one aspect of *TV Century 21* that *Countdown* generally shied away from, and this story was about as far as it went, acknowledging the link between **Captain Scarlet** and the **Thunderbirds Are Go** feature film. Watson's Mysteron Complex even resembled the one seen in the TV series!

Doctor Who took up residence on one of the colour spreads, while the third spread was occupied by a totally original strip with the same name as the comic itself. *Countdown* was a complex SF adventure serial beautifully illustrated by John Burns in which the six man crew of the Earth ship Countdown return to their homeworld in 2037 after a fifty-year exploratory mission to the Tau Ceti star system, only to find the planet under the dictatorial control of the sinister Company and its controller Edward (later William) Costra. Costra wanted Countdown - and the wealth of scientific research on board - destroyed for reasons of his own, and the epic strip followed the struggles of the Countdown crew to evade capture, free the lunar capital Sabine from Costra's control and bring down the Company with the aid of their telepathic alien friend Bikll, an ambassador from the planet Biros.

Hooper had managed to secure permission from MGM to utilise design work from **2001: A Space Odyssey** in the strip, but only the Countdown ship itself (identical to the Discovery Jupiter mission ship in **2001**) and the circa 1987 spacesuits were retained from the film on a regular basis. A continuous story spread across 70 issues (with only a break in issue 20), *Countdown* was tightly plotted and intelligently written science-fiction with genuine characterisation. However, the serial was not popular with readers, particularly late arrivals for whom the story was difficult to pick up, and it was a credit to Hooper that he continued to give the strip (and Burns's art) the prominence it deserved with full colour throughout its run. Other non-TV based SF strips appeared occasionally in the 'Countdown Complete' slot and these also featured craft and spacesuit designs from **2001**.

More varied Anderson material began to appear from issue 2 with the addition of **Joe 90** and **The Secret Service**. Like the **Captain Scarlet** strip, **Joe 90** was awarded a single monochrome page with artwork by Jon Davis, but the strip lasted for only a single six-part story and two 'Countdown Complete' stories before being dropped altogether. The best of these was the serial story 'Josef Nineski' in which the KGB have developed their own version of the BIGRAT and the WIN agents set out to discredit it.

The Secret Service fared no better, appearing in only five issues: a 'Countdown Complete' in issue 2 and a four part single page serial from issue 4. This was the result of the appalling treatment of the series by the ITV network in the UK for, as only three regions had screened it, the show was unknown to most readers. Nonetheless, those few brief pages are a treat for **The Secret Service** fans. The initial five page complete story illustrated by Jon Davis included photos from the series and told how Unwin received the Minimiser from Professor Wilhelm Humbert and became involved as an agent of BISHOP - a story not seen in the series. Unfortunately, Matthew was mistakenly called Adam in this initial strip, but this was corrected for the second story illustrated by Peter Ford, whose whimsical cartoon-style art perfectly suited the format of the show. Here, Unwin and Matthew aided reclusive industrial tycoon Adrian (later Julius) St. Cyr to discover

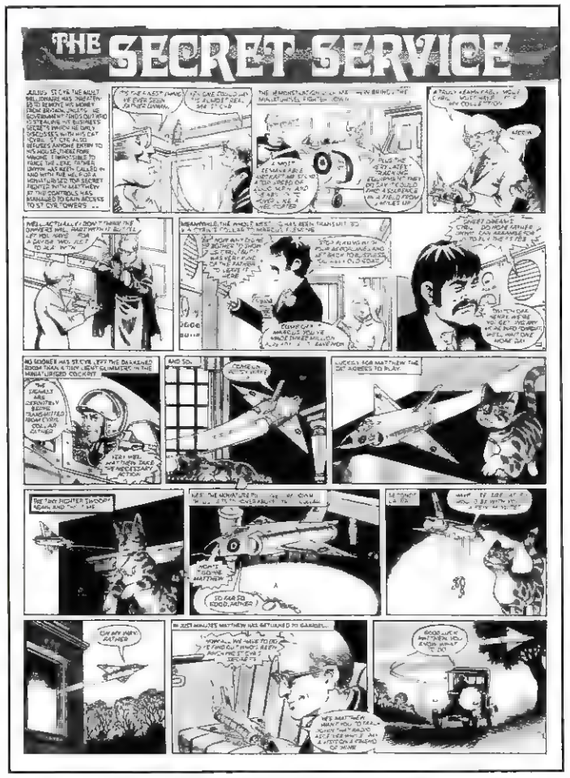


Opposite above: **Fireball XL5** strip from issue 20 illustrated by Brian Lewis; **Stingray** strip from issue 22 illustrated by Brian Lewis; **Thunderbirds** strip from issue 2 illustrated by Don Harley

Opposite. The covers of *Countdown* issues 12, 20, 25, 31 and 34 featuring **UFO** strip art by Gerry Haylock

who was stealing his business secrets, by secreting Matthew amongst St. Cyr's model aeroplane collection in a miniaturised RAF strike fighter. Ford also contributed a six-page **The Secret Service** story to the 1972 *Countdown* Annual, but the art on this strip was less detailed and more akin to Ford's work on the *Dastardly And Muttley* strip.

Stingray made its *Countdown* debut in issue 3 with a six-page 'Countdown Complete' story drawn by Michael Strand. Later illustrated by Colin Page, Rab Hamilton and Brian Lewis, **Stingray** went on to feature in alternating serial and complete stories until issue 22. Although consistent with the series format, *Countdown*'s **Stingray** strips were more serious in tone than the series' episodes had been and there was really very little of the atmosphere of the parent TV show.



Nonetheless, the stories were gripping and unusual, most notably the seven-part 'The Waters Of Hyde' in which a mysterious chromosome in the water on Mars turns Troy and Phones into apemen - it sounds a bit stupid but the story itself was very effective.

Similarly, **Fireball XL5** first appeared in issue 5 in a six-page story drawn by Colin Page, with Rab Hamilton, Malcolm Stokes and Brian Lewis contributing serial and complete stories until issue 20. Once again, the **Fireball** strips were more serious and intelligently written than the TV series, the best of them being the Brian Lewis strip 'Peace Makers' in which Fireball is drawn down to a small planet by hostile Varsonians who threaten the Fireball crew to help them repair their damaged ship.

Lady Penelope joined *Countdown* in issue 4 with art by Frank Langford, the definitive *Lady Penelope* strip artist whose work had previously graced the *Lady Penelope* comic in 1966. Langford was on fine form here and went on to contribute a further *Lady Penelope* story in issue 10, an enjoyable affair in which Penny and Parker take part in a trans-Atlantic airship race and discover a saboteur on board their ship. In another nod of recognition to the 'Anderson Universe', a Spectrum agent called Grenville Summer is seen handling security on board the airship (although he turns out to be the villain of the piece) and the crew of the airship wear uniforms that are very similar to those worn by WASP personnel. Sadly, the *Lady Penelope* strip came to an end in issue 18 with 'The Golden Fleece' a rather routine story drawn by Michael Strand. Another **Thunderbirds** spin-off, *Zero X*, made an unexpected appearance in a complete story in issue 12 drawn by Keith Watson, and returned in issue 27 drawn by Malcolm Stokes.

A bonus for Supermarionation fans was the inclusion in issue 5 of an article on the making of the Anderson puppet shows. Director David Lane and puppeteer Christine Glanville appeared on the front cover on the set of **Thunderbirds Are Go**, and the back page feature included eight colour behind-the-scenes shots from **Thunderbirds Are Go**, **Captain Scarlet And The Mysterons** and **Joe 90** each captioned to reveal Supermarionation secrets.

It was **UFO**, however, that dominated *Countdown* for the first nine months with seven superbly written and illustrated colour serials, all bar three issues drawn by Gerry Haylock. Haylock's artwork was consistent with the series and featured recognisable likenesses of the regulars. Unfortunately, of the regular characters, the only ones to appear in the strip were Straker, Foster, Freeman, Carlin (incorrectly spelt 'Karlin' in the early stories) and Gay Ellis - it is not clear whether this was due to the expense of contractual obligations to the other performers, or whether publicity material provided to the *Countdown* offices failed to mention the significant roles of characters such as Dr. Jackson, Virginia Lake, Lew Waterman and Nina Barry. Either way, this situation persisted throughout the strip's run in the comic.

Without doubt the best of these early stories was 'The New Boss', a seven-part tale starting in issue 12. Here, General Henderson (referred to but not seen) is injured during a UFO attack and his replacement, General Calper, announces his intentions to reveal SHADO's secrets to the general public. When Straker protests, he is branded a traitor and must prove that Calper is under Alien influence while on the run from SHADO forces under Calper's control. Both the writer and the artist clearly illustrated that they understood the dynamics of the TV series in this one story which would have made a very fine episode. Issue 17 even included a veiled continuity reference to the series' *E.S.P.* episode in which Straker, Freeman and Foster meet covertly at "an isolated ruin, scene of a recent UFO explosion", a house which clearly resembles Croxley's house as seen in the episode.

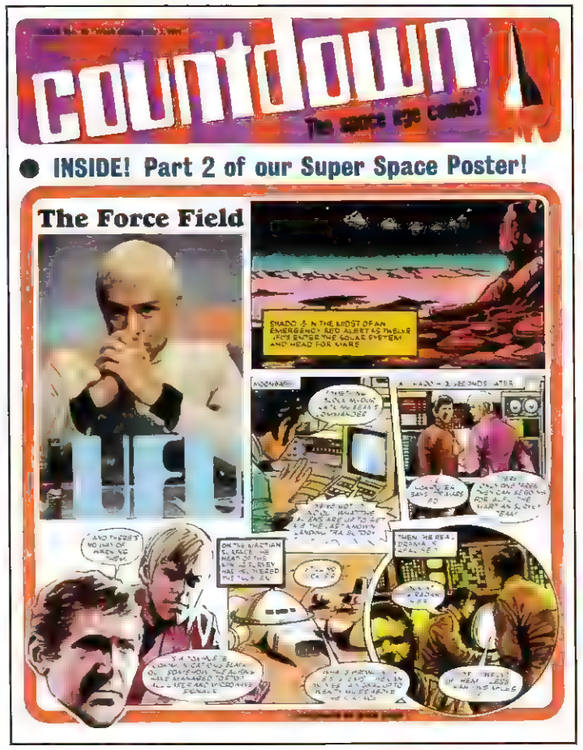
'The New Boss' was followed by two more first-rate strip serials: 'The Force Field' in which the Aliens set up a massive force field around Mars to cover preparations for an invasion of Earth, and 'Arctic Affair' in which Carlin and an Alien are held prisoner at a U.S. Army Base in the Arctic. Sadly, after this the strip went beyond the scope of the TV episodes for a time and lost some of the atmosphere that had been established in the previous issues. In 'The Snatch', Foster is kidnapped by the Aliens and taken to their home planet in a rather silly run-around story that wasn't helped by Jon Davis' comparatively poor art on the last three parts.

In October 1971, Polystyle published the first of two *Countdown* Annuals, a mostly strip-based 80 page book which generally mirrored the contents of the comic but was noticeably heavy on **UFO** material. The endpapers featured A3-size colour spreads of SID and Skydiver, a UFO in Earth orbit was on the back cover (actually the very same picture that had appeared on the cover of *Countdown* issue 1), the contents page included a large picture of Paul Roper (George Cole) with the mobile rocket launcher from *Flight Path*, and a quiz answers page at the back of the book was headed with a similar sized colour photo of Mobile 3 from *Computer Affair*. The first strip was an eight page **UFO** story, 'The Circus' illustrated in full colour by Jon Davis, and this was split in the middle by a four page colour feature on SHADO with large photos from *Timelash*, *Mindbender* and *The Long Sleep*. The rest of the book included a **Thunderbirds** strip drawn by Don Harley, **Captain Scarlet** drawn by John Cooper, the aforementioned **The Secret Service** strip by Peter Ford, **Joe 90** and *Countdown* text stories and two *Dastardly And Muttley* strips (by Peter Ford again). **Doctor Who** fans were well served by an eight page colour strip and a behind-the-scenes feature on the filming of *The Dæmons* in Aldbourne.

By now, Hooper's original vision for *Countdown* was taking a bit of a pounding as the publishers insisted on cutting the magazine's costs. The first signs of this began with issue 21 as **Fireball XL5** began to appear in the form of reprint material from *TV Century 21*, shrunk to fit two half pages, rotated through 90° and printed in black and white. A complete run of the Mike Noble illustrated **Fireball** strip from *TV Century 21* issues 17 to 39 appeared in this format, and was joined in issue 23 by Ron Embleton's **Stingray** strips from issues 23 to 51 and 62 to 71 of *TV Century 21*, mostly printed in black and white but with occasional colour instalments. From issue 24, **Thunderbirds**, too, was a reprint strip - Frank Bellamy's 'Mission To Africa' from issues 59 to 65 of *TV Century 21*, again in black and white. The **Stingray** and **Thunderbirds** strips, however, retained their original size and all three strips were a treat for readers who had missed out on their

Above: **The Secret Service** strip from issue 5 illustrated by Peter Ford

Overleaf: Artwork by Ron Embleton commissioned by Century 21 for the end titles of **Captain Scarlet And The Mysterons**



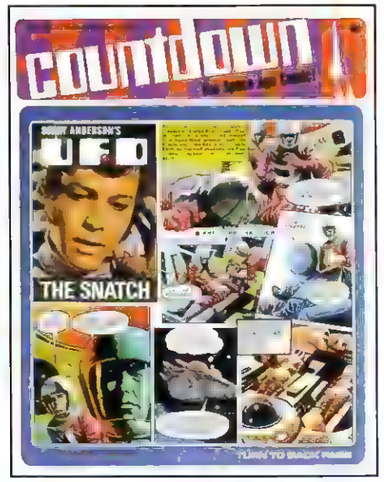
earlier appearances. A couple of reprint strips had already been seen alongside a new **UFO** strip ('The Alien Totem' with art by Jon Davis) in the *Countdown* Holiday Special: a Gerry Embleton **Stingray** strip from issues 58 to 61 of *TV Century 21* and Frank (*Dan Dare*) Hampson's **Fireball XL5** strip from issues 40 to 43. More cost-cutting became evident with the growing number of pages devoted to science-based feature articles on new technology and Apollo space missions.

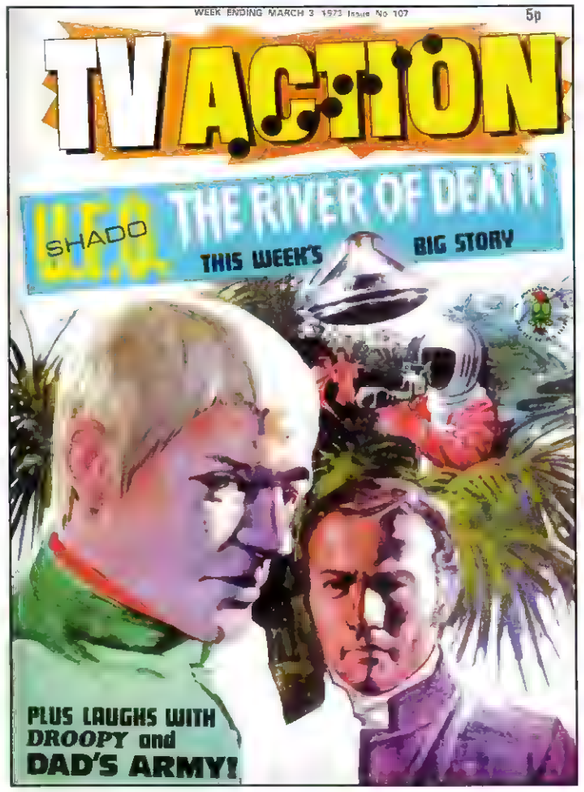
From issue 19, the cover banner on *Countdown* included the caption 'The Space Age Comic!', so it came as some surprise to readers to discover a non-sf strip taking centre stage in the comic from issue 35. A strip based on the Roger Moore + Tony Curtis ITC action series **The Persuaders!** dominated the cover of *Countdown* for the next eight issues and took three colour pages in each (cover and internal spread). The strip was well illustrated by Harry Lindfield who captured the likenesses of the leads, but it was a disappointment to those who bought *Countdown* for its science-fiction content. Unfortunately, this was the shape of things to come for *Countdown* over the next year as the emphasis moved increasingly towards reality-based action strips and away from sf, reflecting the television trends of the time.

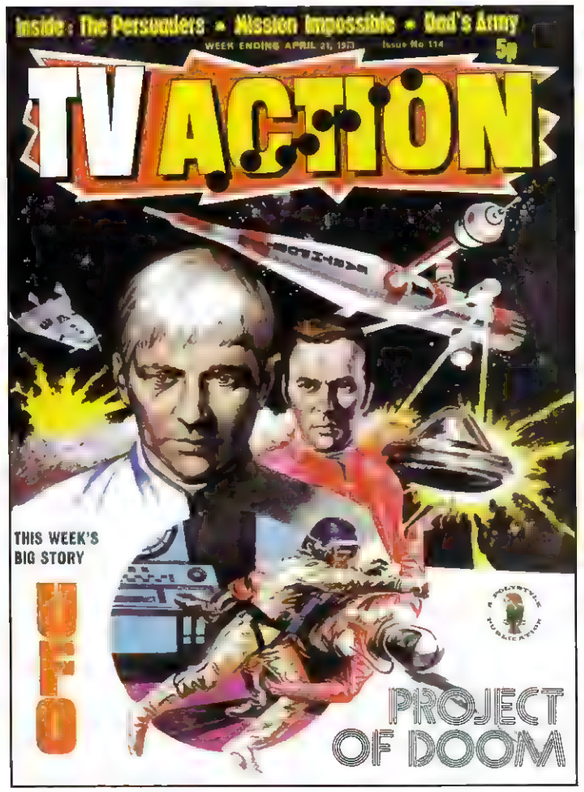
For the next 21 issues, though, *Countdown*'s most popular strip, **UFO**, was allowed an even higher profile than before as 'Countdown Complete' became 'Countdown **UFO** Kingsize', a black and white six-page **UFO** story in each issue with a rotation of artists - Gerry Haylock, Jon Davis, Rab Hamilton, Brian Lewis, Malcolm Stokes and Martin Asbury. Two of these stories were lengthy two-part affairs but most suffered from the trend that had begun with 'The Snatch' - moving beyond the format of the TV series by visiting the Alien planet and having the Aliens speak (and think!) in English to communicate their plans to the SHADO operatives and the readers.

Nonetheless, issue 43's 'The Colour Is Green', drawn by Brian Lewis, was an interesting tale in which the Aliens plan an attack on a convoy of rocket fuel and Straker infiltrates their ranks wearing an Alien suit. Generally, Lewis was the best of the artists working on the strip at this time and his likenesses of the lead actors were, for the most part, remarkably accurate. The only downside of Lewis's art was his tendency to draw rather fat-looking UFOs, but of the 19 'Countdown **UFO** Kingsize' stories it was Lewis's five contributions that proved to be the most interesting with their slightly twisted, nightmarish quality that was perfectly in keeping with the TV series' later episodes.

By now, **Captain Scarlet** had been dropped altogether, but **Stingray**, **Thunderbirds** and **Fireball XL5** were still going strong



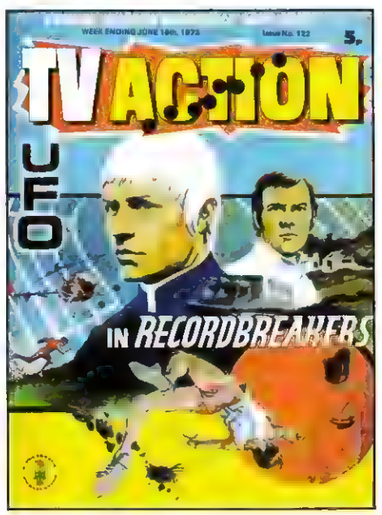


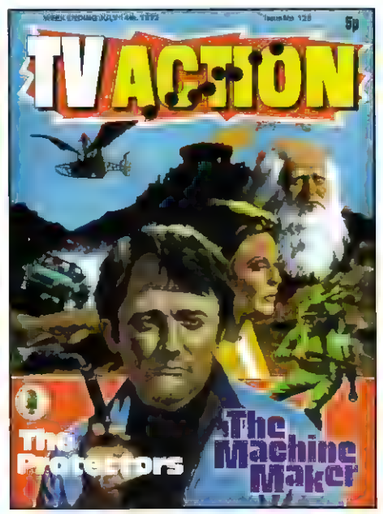

Inside: The Persuaders • Mission Impossible • Dad's Army
WEEK ENDING APRIL 21, 1973 Issue No 114
5p
TV ACTION
THIS WEEK'S BIG STORY
UFO
PROJECT OF DOOM

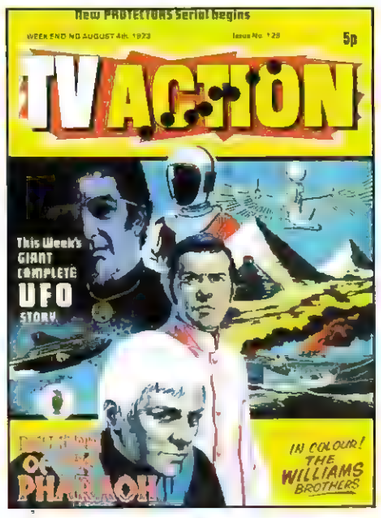
Thunderbirds was even popular enough to warrant a return to original art with Don Harley illustrating two more stories from issue 45. 'U.N. Rescue Ltd.' saw Soviet scientist Professor Cytak encouraging the United Nations to set up their own version of International Rescue, a worthy endeavour until it is revealed that Cytak is none other than The Hood who plans to put International Rescue out of business and set himself up as World President. 'The Crexus Creature' was the final original **Thunderbirds** story to appear in *Countdown* and is the one most fondly remembered by readers. Here, a space probe returns to Earth from the planet Crexus carrying dust samples which grow into a huge destructive jelly creature. The creature goes on a rampage heading for Space Town in Florida and it is up to International Rescue to stop it. Once again, the synopsis sounds very silly, but Harley's realistic presentation made it a classic strip.

The **Doctor Who** strip had become increasingly popular with readers and the introduction of the Daleks in two strips, '*SubZero' and 'Planet Of The Daleks', boosted that popularity to such a level that Hooper decided to make **Doctor Who** the permanent feature on the comic's cover. The move away from sf-based strips towards more action-oriented series was emphasised by a change in the comic's title, which first became *Countdown For TV Action!* (from issue 46) and then changed to *TV Action + Countdown* with issue 59 (dated April 1st, 1972). This title change was accompanied by significant changes to the format: the page size altered, becoming slightly longer and thinner, the comic was printed Web Offset on cheaper paper, and the reversed page numbers that had been a gimmicky feature of *Countdown* (page 1 was numbered page 24 and vice-versa) were replaced by regular numbering.

Fireball XL5 and *Dastardly And Muttley* vanished and were replaced by three new strips: **Hawaii Five-O**, based on the CBS police series starring Jack Lord; **Tightrope**, based on the ATV children's thriller series starring Spencer Banks; and *Autocat And Motormouse* based on the Hanna-Barbera cartoon series **Motormouse And It's The Wolf** (the **It's The Wolf** part of the TV show did not appear). New artists Leslie Branton and Stanley Houton illustrated **Hawaii Five-O** and **Tightrope** respectively, while Peter Ford provided






New PROTECTORS Serial begins
WEEK END NG AUGUST 4th, 1973 Issue No. 128
5p
TV ACTION
This Week's GIANT COMPLETE UFO STORY
IN COLOUR! THE WILLIAMS BROTHERS
PHARAOH

Opposite The covers of *TV Action* issues 107, 114, 122, 126 and 129 featuring **UFO** artwork by John M Burns

the art on *Autocat And Motormouse*. **UFO** became a two-page serial strip once more, now drawn by Brian Lewis, **The Persuaders!** was reduced to a two-page colour spread with art by Harry Lindfield, and the two remaining colour spreads were given over to *Countdown* and the **Stingray** reprints from *TV Century 21*. Don Harley's **Thunderbirds** strip initially made the cross-over to the new format, but then ended in issue 60. **Doctor Who** became a three page strip (front cover and black and white interior spread) drawn by Gerry Haylock, who also painted a large opening panel for each strip on the cover.

The first new **UFO** serial story was the eight-part 'Let The Aliens Land', an epic strip and one of *Countdown*'s finest **UFO** stories. This told of a publicity stunt by Burdon chain stores in which luxury goods are given away free as a gesture of friendship between planets - "Gifts From Space For The People Of Earth". Straker suspects a sinister conspiracy organised by the Aliens, but discovers that the scheme is masterminded by reclusive millionaire Dimitri Krassos. Straker and Foster fly to Krassos's Greek island home - there they are captured by the power-mad technocrat who plans to take over the world with the unwilling help of a group of Aliens, whom he is also holding prisoner. The SHADO men free two of the Aliens who offer a truce while they work together to combat Krassos. So good was this story that the four-part follow-up story, 'The Final Climb' illustrated by Jon Davis, could only disappoint.

From issue 62, **Stingray** was dropped back to a monochrome spread for reprints of Gerry Embleton's 'Superjunk' story from *TV Century 21* issues 72 to 81 (the art was erroneously credited to Don Harley), leaving a two-page colour centre spread free for the return of **Captain Scarlet** in issue 63, a reprint Ron Embleton strip from *TV Century 21* issues 141 to 148. This line-up remained static through to issue 70 when the *Countdown* strip finally came to an end, coinciding with the end of the **Captain Scarlet** reprint strip. From issue 71, readers were treated to reprints of Frank Bellamy's three-page (two colour, one black and white) **Thunderbirds** strips from *TV Century 21* issues 52 to 58, while artist John Burns, freed from *Countdown*, now turned his hand to **UFO** which was also bumped up to a three-page strip.

Burns became the sole artist on **UFO** and turned in a series of consistently excellent strips from this point onwards: 'Small World' (a miniaturised Straker is aboard a damaged Lunar Module when it is captured by the Aliens and ferried to a huge Alien space station), 'Eyes Of Terror' (Freeman falls under the influence of a hypnotic Alien device), and 'Brotherhood Of Evil' (an Alien exploits a group of devil-worshipping monks in the Austrian Alps), were the best of a rich crop of original and thought-provoking stories.

The Anderson content of the comic picked up again as the old *Countdown* format of rotating strips began to resurface. The **Stingray** reprints came to an end in issue 71 and did not return but the strip was replaced by **Fireball XL5** starting with the 'Sword Of Damacles' Mike Noble strip reprinted from *TV Century 21* issues 71 to 78. The **Fireball** strip continued right through to issue 99 reprinting *TV Century 21* strips from issues 87-89 (Eric Eden art), 90-100 (Mike Noble art) and 149 to 154 (single pages illustrated by Colin Andrew).

Thunderbirds came to an end in issue 77 and also did not return, but this strip was replaced by another run of colour **Captain Scarlet** reprints starting in issue 78. Once again the strip featured art by Ron Embleton, this time from *TV Century 21* issues 150 to 153 but, somewhat bizarrely, the final instalment of the story (originally published in *TV Century 21* issue 154) was completely redrawn by Martin Asbury for its appearance in *TV Action + Countdown* issue 82. The layout and frame content was identical to Embleton's original strip, but illustrated in Martin Asbury's distinctive style! Presumably the original artwork had been damaged and was not in a good enough condition for reproduction. This was to be **Captain Scarlet**'s last appearance in *TV Action + Countdown* - the strip was replaced from issue 83 with reprints of the first two *Zero X* stories from *TV Century 21* (issues 105 to 121).

A full eight pages of *TV Action + Countdown*'s 24 were now being given over to scientific articles about the Apollo missions, new cars and Army vehicles, features that were recognised by the readers as the cheap padding they were and largely ignored. This situation was remedied slightly by the introduction of photo strips in issue 86 which examined a particular topic through a series of stills - complete with boxed captions and speech balloons - as 'TV Action Man' Roger Perry drove a car at Brands Hatch, went down a sewer, was rescued from the sea by helicopter and went to Fleet Street to see how a newspaper was printed. It was still cheap padding, but at least it was presented in an interesting fashion.

The **Tightrope** strip had proven extremely unpopular, so no tears were shed when it was replaced by a strip based on the Paramount series **Mission: Impossible** from issue 88. A one page article in issue 87 introduced the main characters, which sadly did not include the characters of Rollin Hand and Cinnamon Carter portrayed by **Space:1999**'s Martin Landau and Barbara Bain as, at this point in the BBC screenings of the series (fifth season), they had been succeeded by Leonard Nimoy as Paris and Lesley Ann Warren as Dana Lambert. The two-page **Mission: Impossible** strip was drawn by **UFO**'s John Burns, who was now contributing five pages of art to each issue.

A second *Countdown* Annual hit the shelves in Autumn 1972 and this was, if anything, more **UFO**-intensive than the first. Michael Billington appeared prominently on the cover as Colonel Foster next to a small photo of a **UFO** and these images (indeed, the entire front cover layout) were repeated on the back cover. Inside, the contents page included large pictures of Peter Gordeno (as Peter Carlin) and a SHADO Mobile (once again from *Computer Affair*), and in addition to the two full colour **UFO** comic strips ('Smash And Grab' drawn by Martin Asbury and 'The Haunted Mine' illustrated by an unknown artist) there was a cutaway diagram of an Interceptor, a biography of actor Ed Bishop (Ed Straker) and a **UFO** game with ten colour photos. On top of this, there was a duotone (black and green) **Thunderbirds** strip drawn by Ron Turner, a duotone (black and blue) **Captain Scarlet** strip with art by Malcolm Stokes, a full colour **Doctor Who** strip illustrated by Frank Langford, a **The Persuaders!** text story and both *Dastardly And Muttley* and *Autocat And Motormouse* strips drawn by Peter Ford. For the sheer quality of the stories and artwork, it was by far the better of the two Annuals.

Back in the comic, changes were once again

LET THE ALIENS LAND
ART BRIAN LEWIS
HIGH ABOVE SOUTHERN ENGLAND
LISTEN TO SHADO CONTROL IN DOWNWARDS AREA. SHOULD HAVE CONTACT WITH MOBILE WITHIN EIGHT MINUTES
NOT MANY MILES AWAY A SHADO MOBILE WAITS FOR THE TOUCH DOWN
MOBILE ON ROAD TO COLONEL FOSTER AND SHOULD BE WITH HIM CLOSING IN
ROB LONG MINUTES THE TWO VEHICLES MOVE IN SILENCE
THE FINAL HEADING NORTH THROUGH THE WOODS
YOU KEEP AFTER ME, I'LL TAKE THE HEAD, YOU GIVE ME AND BRENNEKER A HALF MILE AT
WE KEEP SOMETHING NEAR US TO CROSS THE ROAD
MEANWHILE — THE MOBILE IS ALSO ON THE ALIEN'S SCANNER
I'VE VE GOT HIM, FRIEND
THE ALIEN DOESN'T STAND A CHANCE
BUT SECONDS LATER

Above: The opening page of 'Let The Aliens Land', a **UFO** strip illustrated by Brian Lewis for *TV Action + Countdown* issue 59

afoot as *Countdown/TV Action* passed its centenary. **Fireball XL5** and *Zero X* both came to an end in issue 99 and the Supermarionation shows were dropped altogether. Issue 100 then featured a full colour centre spread with six large photos to introduce the latest addition to the comic's line-up, Gerry Anderson's **The Protectors**. This new strip took the prominent place on the cover of *The New TV Action* as the comic entered its final phase in January 1973. The *Countdown* part of the title was dropped altogether and the only sf strips to be retained were **UFO** and **Doctor Who**. The 'Countdown Complete' idea returned as 'The Big Story', a seven-page black and white story split in the middle by the other strips. The roster of strips was rotated through the subsequent issues, from 'Big Story' to serial, then rested for a few weeks and

then back to 'Big Story' again. Each issue's 'Big Story' was heralded by a full colour painting by the strip's artist on the front cover.

Frank Langford provided the art for the first **The Protectors** story, 'Boxful Of Trouble' in issue 101, offering some remarkable likenesses of lead actors Robert Vaughn (Harry Rule), Nyree Dawn Porter (Caroline di Contini) and Yasuko Nagazumi (Suki). Tony Anholt (as Paul Buchet) was, however, unrecognisable. The *Autocat And Motormouse* strip was dropped and Peter Ford now provided three strip pages in each issue, a single page **Droopy** strip based on the MGM cartoon character and a two-page **Dad's Army** strip from the BBC sitcom. Two other new strips joined the line-up over the next two issues: **Cannon**, illustrated by Martin Asbury from the CBS thriller series starring William Conrad, and

Alias Smith And Jones, illustrated by Colin Andrew from the ABC western series starring Pete Duel and Ben Murphy. The latter strip, interestingly, retained Pete Duel's likeness as Hannibal Heyes throughout its run, even though Duel had killed himself in December 1971 and had been replaced in the TV series by Roger Davis.

The science-based feature articles were dropped altogether and two new features began: Peter Levy's 'TV Screen Scene' which featured newsy articles from the world of television ("Here is Nyree Dawn Porter with husband Eric Porter who is also a well-known actor..."), and 'Action Mail' which was really just an opportunity for readers to ask questions about their favourite TV shows - rather than to complain that most of their favourite shows had been dropped from the comic in favour of minimal interest 'popular' television. Unfortunately, this feature was written by someone who, more often than not, didn't know what they were talking about. In issue 131, Terry Sims of Widnes asked if there were any female Daleks. The response could not have been more ignorant of a decade of **Doctor Who** continuity: "No, the Daleks are mechanical robots with no real differences between them. Reproduction in the Dalek community is achieved by a factory process. I wouldn't like to imagine what a female Dalek would look like! Someone had had a go though - the paragraph was accompanied by a cartoon of a Dalek with a skirt, handbag, thick lips and heavy eyelashes. Readers could barely contain their mirth.

UFO vanished for two issues which meant that for the first time there was no Anderson series content at all in the comic in issue 102 barring a short piece about actor Robert Vaughn in 'Action Mail'. "He is well known as a quiet man," was the amusing response to a query from John Andrews of Edinburgh.

Fortunately, **UFO** was back in issue 103 for the four-part 'The Million Year-Old Trap' with art once again in colour by John Burns, though now just on two pages. Another gripping tale, 'The Million Year-Old Trap' had Foster and astronaut Swann discovering the remains of an ancient civilisation beneath the Moon's surface. Having triggered a destruction device left by the Csassk, Foster and Swann must complete a series of tests to save the Moon.

Subsequent strips were printed in black and white and were generally pretty lacklustre in content until a return to colour with the last **UFO** serial strip, 'They Walk In Darkness', in which Fred Jones, an innocent man who has been tried and found guilty of murdering his uncle during a pot-holing expedition, is given the opportunity to prove his innocence by Paul Foster, who believes the uncle may have been killed by Aliens. Foster springs Jones from police custody and takes him back to the Taffyn Caves where they discover a group of Aliens who have adapted to living in total darkness. Although the strip never explained what the Aliens were doing in the caves, it was nonetheless an eerie and effective story.

Meanwhile, after a promising start, **The Protectors** strip was cursed by a series of very poor stories illustrated by even poorer artists, among them Rab Hamilton and Leslie Branton. Frank Langford turned in an excellent second full-length story in issue 109 - 'Busman's Holiday', in which Harry goes out on a limb to rescue film star Greta Larson from the clutches of an Arab king - but in the main **The Protectors** strip was rubbish. 'Boy Wonder' had the Contessa unconvincingly disguised as pop sensation Wee Davey to foil a ruthless kidnapper, in 'A Piece Of The Moon', Harry and his team attempted to recover an unique moonrock sample which had been stolen from a Swiss bank, and in 'The Machine Maker', Harry and the Contessa are trapped in a castle with a man who thinks he is Leonardo Da Vinci.

The latter story was illustrated by Mario Capaldi whose art had a certain style about it and his likenesses of the lead characters were very passable. Capaldi drew the final **The Protectors** strip 'Houdini Whodunnit!' which was by far the most interesting story of the lot with Harry and the gang hired to protect magician Magus the Magnificent from his rival, the Mystic Chang, who wanted Magus to reveal Houdini's secrets. In an inspired sequence in issue 131, Chang kidnaps Suki and subjects her to Houdini's Chinese Torture Chamber - she has just sixty seconds to live and a series of clock faces in the corner of each strip panel counts down the time at five second intervals as Harry races to rescue her.

Of all the strips appearing in *The New TV Action*, only **Mission: Impossible** and **Doctor Who** maintained a consistent level of quality in both story and art. In the **Mission: Impossible** strip, the IMF team was joined by a character called 'Doc' who may have been based on fifth season regular Dr. Doug Robert as played by Sam Elliott, although the character in the strip bore no facial resemblance to him whatsoever. Apart from this addition, the roster of IMF members in the strip remained the same throughout the run in *TV Action* while on television both Leonard Nimoy and Lesley Ann Warren had left the series in 1971 and been replaced by Lynda Day George as Casey for the last two seasons. Over on **Doctor Who**, Gerry Haylock contributed a variety of interesting stories which even featured appearances by screen villains the Master (in the likeness of Roger Delgado) and the Daleks.

By the end of August 1973, *TV Action* was on its last legs. The print quality was very poor and often misregistered, the paper had become cheaper and cheaper and it was clear that the comic was living on borrowed time. The final **UFO** strip appeared in issue 129. Titled 'Return Of The Pharoah', the story involved an Egyptian madman based in an ancient pyramid using the Aliens to steal priceless treasure. It was a disappointing end to a generally well-illustrated and intelligently-written strip.

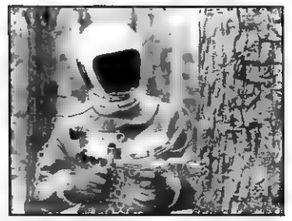
The last gasp for *TV Action* was issue 132, dated August 25th, 1973. For the editorial staff, all hope for reasonable sales had gone and the major selling point of the final issue was a double-page colour pin-up of pop group Blackfoot Sue. The last Anderson material to appear before *TV Action* finally bit the dust was a small picture of Michael Billington requested by a reader, the last part of **The Protectors** strip 'Houdini Whodunnit!' and a full page photo of Robert Vaughn and Tony Anholt sitting inside the helicopter from *Brother Hood*. It was a sad end to a magazine that, throughout its first 100 issues, had mostly lived up to the promise of Hooper's issue 1 editorial.

Page 15 of the last issue invited readers to tune into their top *TV Action* favourites the following week in *TV Comic*, but it was only the strips starting with the letters 'C' and 'D' that were to be incorporated into *TV Action*'s companion paper **Cannon, Dad's Army, Droopy** and **Doctor Who**. For fans of Gerry Anderson and TV science-fiction it was time to jump ship to *Look-in*. ●

Above: An instalment of 'Houdini Whodunnit', a **The Protectors** strip illustrated by Mario Capaldi for *TV Action* issue 131

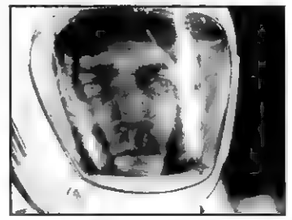
UFO ALIEN - UFO

GITO SANTANA



UFO - *Computer Affair*

Gito Santana **has the distinction of being the very first actor to appear in** UFO **- it is his eye from which the contact shell is removed in the opening shot of the title sequence. As the creepiest of all the Aliens to appear in** UFO**, he terrified impressionable youngsters in episodes such as *Identified*, *Survival* and *The Sound Of Silence* among others.**



UFO - *Survival*

One of the single most memorable images seen in any of the Gerry Anderson programmes is the opening shot from the title sequence of UFO**. The disturbing sight of the contact shell being removed from the eye of the unwelcome Alien visitor signalled a new era for Anderson and his television productions, but the unfortunate Alien was in reality Mauritius-born actor** Gito Santana.

Born on the idyllic island in the Indian Ocean, as a boy, Santana spent many hours enjoying the films of Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis at his local cinema. He never dreamt that as an adult he would be in showbusiness himself enjoying friendships with actors who were close friends of his childhood idols, Sammy Davis, Jr. and Peter Lawford among them.

Like many of the artistes to appear in UFO**, Santana was hand-picked for the part of the first Alien to pose a threat to SHADO. He proved so popular with the cast and crew that he would reprise his role as an Alien on numerous occasions throughout the series' 26 episode run in such memorable episodes as *Identified*, *Computer Affair*, *Survival*, *The Sound Of Silence* and *The Long Sleep*.**

After UFO **ended production, Santana travelled the world building a reputation as a reliable and professional performer. He has appeared in many big budget productions including** Gandhi **(1982),** Octopussy **(1983) and the science-fiction blockbuster** The Fifth Element **(1997). He recently appeared as a Shaolin Priest in *The Devil's Daughter*, the ninth episode of the science-fiction series** Flatland**, an international co-production starring Dennis Hopper which is the most expensive television production ever filmed in mainland China.** Martin Gainsford **was recently invited to meet Gito Santana at his London flat.**

Could you tell us a little about your early life?

Well, I was born in Mauritius and spent my childhood there. In the early 1960s, I came to England and joined the Royal Air Force. I was in the RAF for three years and for part of that time I was in Libya, North Africa. We were stationed in the desert and one day, one of my officers asked me what I was planning to do that evening. I told him that I would be doing the usual kind of things: have something to eat in the mess and then meet up with the lads for a game of snooker or darts, that kind of stuff. I speak with a French accent because of my background and I was known as 'Frenchie' so the officer said, "Frenchie, tonight I want you to come to the officers' mess. We are putting together a show for the lads and we'd like you to come along and join in."

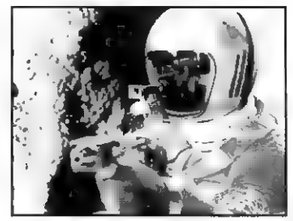
I was so afraid as I had never done anything like that before. I wasn't an actor and I just didn't know what to do. When I arrived the officer greeted me and said, "Tonight, we are on first name terms - there are no ranks. Just read this script and follow it." Many of the officers were there, some with their wives, so I was a little nervous but they made me feel very welcome. It was hard for me not to call them 'Sir'. Anyway, after a little time, I was told that I was to read the lines of a particular character. We began to read it again but with all of us doing certain lines. My heart was beating really fast but that was my first experience with show business.

Later on, all my mates asked me where I had been that night. Usually we played darts or snooker and when I told them what I had been doing, they just laughed at me and told me that they would be ready to 'pull my leg' whenever they could, but it was all good fun because we were friends.

How did you cope on your first night?

Well, I was very nervous but once I was up on the stage I couldn't see the audience because of the stage lights so I just forgot about my friends who had said they would be whistling and all that sort of stuff. I found it to be really easy and enjoyed it very much. This was about 1962.

How did your professional career begin?



UFO *Survival*

UFO *The Long Sleep*

ANDERSON SCREENOGRAPHY

UFO (1969/70)	
Identified	(Alien)
Computer Affair	(Alien)
Survival	(Alien)
Ordeal	(Alien)
The Sound Of Silence	(Alien)
Mindbender	(Alien)
The Long Sleep	(Alien)

Above: Gito Santana is reunited with the Alien helmet that he wore in **UFO** at an Italian convention in 1998 (Photo by Paolo Maraguti)

Gito Santana as the Alien with Michael Billington as Colonel Paul Foster in the **UFO** episode *Survival*

After I was demobbed, I returned to England and was living in Bayswater, London. I was working at a telephone company and not involved in acting at all. It was an international telephone company and I was working as a linguist. I was also going to evening classes to study other subjects. I met a Swiss girl working as an au-pair, and she lived close to me in Bayswater so we got to know each other pretty well. One time she said to me, "What are you doing on Wednesday evening because a group of us get together at a small theatre to talk and sing and act and I thought you may like to come along." I decided that it might be nice to go along and so I did. The place was called the Unity Theatre. There was a pub next to the theatre and it was a really nice evening. I carried on going every Wednesday and I was introduced to many people, some of whom were in 'showbiz'.

One night, someone came up to me and said, "Hey, did you know that next door they are casting for *Inherit The Wind*?" The director was a man called David Bauer who was a famous American actor in the Sixties. He was in **Diamonds Are Forever**, the Bond movie, and he did lots of other things. Anyway, I went through and was introduced to him. This play was about the famous 1925 'Scopes Monkey Trial' in which a young teacher was accused of promoting Darwin's ideas on the origin of mankind. I was asked to audition for the role of a hot dog seller. It wasn't a big role at all but I was excited to have been asked to try it out. I did alright but then some other guy turned up and went on stage and did his stuff. He was fantastic and we all thought, "Who is this guy?" He got the part of a reporter and do you know who it was? Bob Hoskins. That is where it all began for him. The Unity Theatre was the start for many others too, like Warren Mitchell. They are both great actors.

Did mixing with these types of people encourage you to take acting more seriously?
Oh, yes. When I wasn't rehearsing or performing we would talk about theatre, film and television and all aspects of acting. I was still, at that time, doing a normal job but during the *Inherit The Wind* auditions, a full time actor told me that television was something I should consider. I didn't know anybody in television and didn't know what the first thing to do was to get into it. He told me, "Gito, you are brown. You are made-up already. The rest of us have to have make-up on but you look good even before they have started on you!"

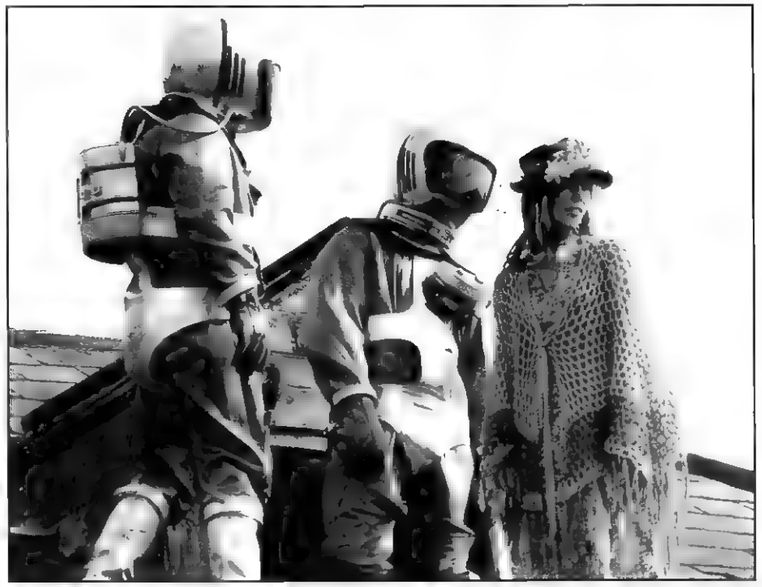
He gave me the name of an agent, Denton Degray, who mostly dealt with walk-ons and extras. I went to see him and he liked the look of me. I filled in a form which required your height, shoe size, hat size, what languages you speak, do you drive and all that stuff. While I was filling out the form the intercom went and the receptionist took the message. She asked me if I was free next week. I was so pleased to get something so quick that I agreed immediately, even though I was still doing a proper job. I worked in the evening so it wasn't a problem but I was prepared to go sick if I had to because I really wanted to act.

What was that first role?
Teach Yourself French. It was an educational programme on the BBC. I then got my Equity card and that was it. I went on and did **Teach Yourself Spanish** and **Teach Yourself Italian** and I was always playing a waiter. I was so pleased that this man at the Unity Theatre had encouraged me to see the agent. I would always ask to watch the filming if I wasn't required so that I could learn the different aspects of television and I learnt a great deal from that.

How did this lead to your role in UFO?
My agent called me to say that the Andersons had seen a picture of me and wanted to meet me in person. I didn't know a great deal about the other things that they had done apart from **Thunderbirds** which I think everyone knew about. In the Sixties, let me tell you, **Thunderbirds** really *were* 'go'! It was so popular, it was great. I went out to the studios where I met Reg Hill and I was taken on.

What are your recollections of those first days on UFO?
Well, obviously the costume and make-up were the main things. As I recall, I went for special fittings in Borehamwood for the costume. The make-up wasn't a problem really but the eyes were the big thing for me. I was sent to a special place in Marylebone for this special fitting. I was happy to go through the discomfort because I like to be professional. Once I signed up for the part, I would do whatever was asked of me.

My other early memories of the show are relating to a guy who I knew very well, an Italian actor called Franco Derosa. He was due to play a big role in **UFO** and he was a really good-looking actor. Do you know he was kicked out? If I had been in his shoes I would have done whatever was asked of me. I probably would have lived and slept in the studios too, but he had this big part and he blew it. There was a great deal of money involved in **UFO** and when they needed to shoot, you had to be ready. Sometimes you have a break and you go to your dressing room or the canteen, but you must be somewhere where the director or whoever can get you immediately. Not Franco. People were looking all over for him.



Above: Gito Santana as the Alien with Tessa Wyatt as Catherine Frazer on the roof of the Coach House at Dromenagh Farm, Iver Heath during filming of *The Long Sleep*

The other big story relating to him is that he was on the set, maybe the Moonbase set, and he was doing a scene. One minute, everything was going fine and then the next minute he has something in his hand, I don't know, a pencil or something, but it wasn't an actual prop that was supposed to be there - it was just something that he picked up off set and it spoiled the shot. On a show like **UFO** you couldn't afford to behave like that and after just a few days he was gone. He was careless and basically unprofessional. I knew Franco pretty well and I said, "Come on, man. What are you doing? This is a great role and you are going to lose it if you carry on like this."

What was the Alien costume like to work in?
Well, I didn't find it too much of a problem. I have to say that the directors were very good. They knew that it was a little difficult and so they would only insist on my putting everything on for the final rehearsal and the shoot itself. They would let me take the helmet off and the contact shells out.

Even though the shells were made for me specially they were still pretty unpleasant - I mean you can't wear them for hours and hours. I had been taught how to put them in and take them out so it became easy for me. I could just pop them in or out, no problem. One time, I was just about to put them in when I realised that everybody on the set was just staring at me. I asked Alan Perry, the director, to clear the set while I put the eyes in and got all the stuff on. I could have done it anyway, but it did help me to get into the character of an Alien, someone who is different and alone - especially in the episode *Survival* which is one of my favourites.

I enjoy wearing costumes for roles. If I wear a military costume I can become a military man. I wore the space suit on **UFO** and I became the Alien. The costume was a bit of a problem to get into but you got quicker as the series went on. I did have some assistants because all those little round rings were forever falling off or getting tangled. They were lightly sewn onto the costume but they often fell off. I was always involved in doing my scenes so there was someone who kept an eye on the suit and fixed things and sewed bits back on if it was needed.

The helmet was probably the worst part. It was clipped into position like a real space suit I guess. It was very hot and air was limited so it always went on at the last minute. Alan and the other directors always said, "If you've got all the gear on and you are in trouble, just stop and we'll get you out of it." This was good for me to know. Generally, I can't recall being in the full suit for more than about 10 minutes at a time.

The tanks on the back were pretty light and that shows how good the effects were because they look like real metal but they weren't. It was all fake. The costumes were one of the best things on the show anyway, those things the girls wore were just beautiful and all the other clothes were just great and I think credit must go to Sylvia Anderson on that one. The whole look that was created for the characters was just wonderful.

I remember a true story about that actually. I was in make-up and sitting next to me was Ed Bishop. He had the wig on and it totally changed his appearance. Someone new to the cast stuck their head in - I think it may have been Matt Zimmerman or Shane Rimmer - and they said, "Hey, has anybody seen Ed Bishop?" He was sitting right there but as they were new to the show, they only knew him as he really was and not as he was as Straker. The look changed him completely and maybe that helped him take on this hard role of Commander Straker.

In real life, Ed is such a nice guy. I met him over in Italy recently and you can't believe he was this tough guy in charge of this organisation because he is such a nice, friendly person in real life. He is a fine actor.

You mentioned Alan Perry. What other directors do you recall from the programme?
I recall Alan, David Lane and Jeremy Summers. I have learnt that they were people who started on the puppet programmes but I was really impressed with them as directors. I never felt that they should only be doing puppet programmes. I was still young and new to the business so I didn't have a huge amount of experience but I must say I always enjoyed working for them. For me, once I heard, "Cut and print," I was happy. I knew I had done my stuff well and it was now someone else's problem and I could take those eyes out!

As you came back to the role on many occasions, you must have been a well-liked personality on the set?
Yes, the crew were great and the actors were very nice too. Gerry Anderson was wonderful and I would work for him tomorrow if he asked me. He was a nice guy. They were all nice guys. For example, it was funny because on *Survival* you see me trying to carry Michael Billington around because he's got the broken leg. That guy was *big*, you know, like a tough guy - he was twice my size. I told Mike, "Look man, you are a big guy and I just can't carry you like they want me to." Mike said, "Don't worry, we'll work it out. We're actors and we just have to pretend and make it look good." So he really was a nice guy to work with.

Survival is an immensely popular episode. Can you tell us about your thoughts on it?
Firstly, I was disappointed that I had to die at the end, although it did make it a memorable episode. I guess it shows why **UFO** is so well-remembered today. I begin as the bad guy, because I kill Foster's friend. Then I am a kind of anti-hero when I am first with Foster on the Moon, and by the end of the story I am the hero who has saved his life and everyone is sad when I am killed. It was different to other science-fiction and I suppose that was a good thing.

I am also very proud of *Identified*, but the other episodes I did were not really memorable for me. Even on location in those woods it was just another day for me. I don't want to disappoint followers of **UFO** but sometimes it really was just a job for me. Physically, *Survival* was the hardest one for me. I was in the complete suit for the whole episode. I sweated a great deal. I must say that the whole episode was planned out really well by the director and we had the chance to do a strenuous scene followed by a more easy one so we could get our breath back a little.

Mike and I got on really well. A few years later, I was doing something at the BBC and I was going through a set of swing doors and at the exact same time in the opposite direction came Mike Billington. He grabbed my hand and we talked and spoke of the old days on **UFO**. He was a great guy and I have good memories of him on the programme. I also met Ed Bishop a few times but we have all moved on and done new things.

What did you like about *Identified*?
Well, I think that one is very nice actually. I liked having the full make-up especially at the end when I am supposed to be getting old. I like the bit when I am referred to as 'Straker's special patient' and I am wheeled in through the back door, all of that stuff with Maxwell Shaw as the SHADO doctor with me looking scared and getting out of breath. I watched that episode recently and it is just

Above: Director Alan Perry (centre) and assistant director Ron Appleton (left) show Gito Santana how they want him to point the Alien rifle during filming of the **UFO** episode *Survival*

Gito Santana as a Shaolin Priest filming on location in Shanghai for the **Flatland** episode *The Devil's Daughter*

beautiful. Very well done television. Even the design of the aircraft that George Sewell flies. It looks like Concorde. You know everyone was looking to the future but in a realistic way. I just feel proud to have been a part of the programme.

Is it true to say that you were used as an Alien throughout the entire series?

It is very difficult to remember exactly as it is 30 years ago. The big episodes for me are the ones I did the most acting in like *Identified*, *The Sound Of Silence* and, of course, *Survival*. I do have general recollections of being in the suit in the woods near the studio on a few occasions and also in the studio with it all on. I also remember very well being with Tessa Wyatt and the young guy Christian Roberts.

The episode was *The Long Sleep*.

Yes, that's right, but I don't remember too much about those later episodes. On those **UFO** episodes I would just wait around to do some stuff in the suit. I remember that I would often think about things like, why there were only ever two Aliens or me on my own. I guess budget came into it but I would have liked to have seen some background to this race of people trying to survive. I would have liked to have seen other types of Alien as well. I used to think to myself, "Hey, these Aliens are pretty lonely guys. They travel all those miles in space on their own or with just one companion. I wonder if they have girlfriends and families?" It should have been something that was considered in my opinion.

What have you appeared in since your time in UFO**?**

I have done all sorts of stuff. I did a lot of television in the 1970s. I was in the Bond movie **Octopussy**, **Gandhi**, and **Fortunes Of War** with Kenneth Branagh and Emma Thompson - that was when they first met actually. I was in a film with Andy Garcia called **American Roulette** which was a nice part. I did some of **The Young Indiana Jones Chronicles** series which was great and I was also in **The Fifth Element** with Bruce Willis. I was a security guard at the airport. That was a really big picture. Luc Besson was a real nice guy. I was almost in **Space Precinct**, but I travel a great deal and it was not to be.

The most recent thing I have done was at the end of last year when I played a shaolin priest in the first and most expensive TV production ever filmed in mainland China. The series is called **Flatland** and has an international cast headed by Dennis Hopper. It is a Hollywood/Hong Kong/Chinese co-production and is being done completely in English. I was in episode number nine, *The Devil's Daughter*.

I am about to start work on another film in China, but it does not have a title yet. They have written a special part for me in the film. Actually, I went for an audition and met the director and a few other people, the writer and the writer's wife and so on. I was finally told that I was not suited for the role that I was auditioning for, but the director said that he was so fascinated with meeting a professional actor from the UK who has been in so many things - including **UFO**, I may add - that he definitely wanted me to be in his movie and that he would get the writer to write a special part for me. Then he asked how much money I wanted to appear in the film and when I told him, he got a shock! He said that it was way too high so I said, "Listen, I am a professional!" He said that in China actors get very little, like peanuts, man. So I said, "Forget it," and I tried to walk out, but he said, "No, wait... for that money you are asking, I will have to write a bigger part for you." So I said, "OK, you do that." A big part in a widescreen Chinese movie for a guy who comes from Mauritius isn't bad, is it?

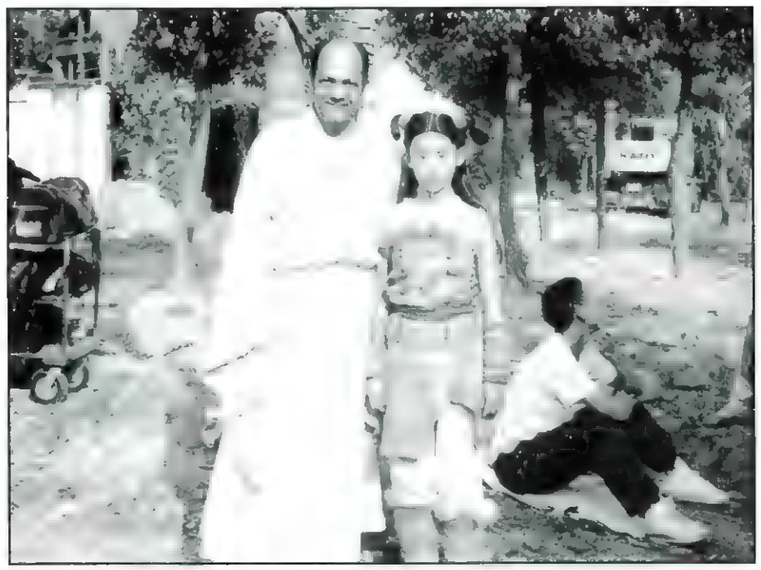
When did you first become aware of the ongoing interest in UFO**?**

Some years ago, I had a letter from a **UFO** fan through the actors union. It was a really nice letter and I decided to call this guy to thank him. He was so pleased to hear from me and and I was pleased to hear about his interest in the show. Then I began to hear from **UFO** fans from all over the world. There was Teruo Yamada in Japan and, of course, Paolo Maraguti in Italy who is now a great friend. I am pleased that people enjoy the programme still. If I had known how important **UFO** is to so many people I would have kept the suit and the shells and the scripts and everything. I have met some very nice people through **UFO** all over the world.

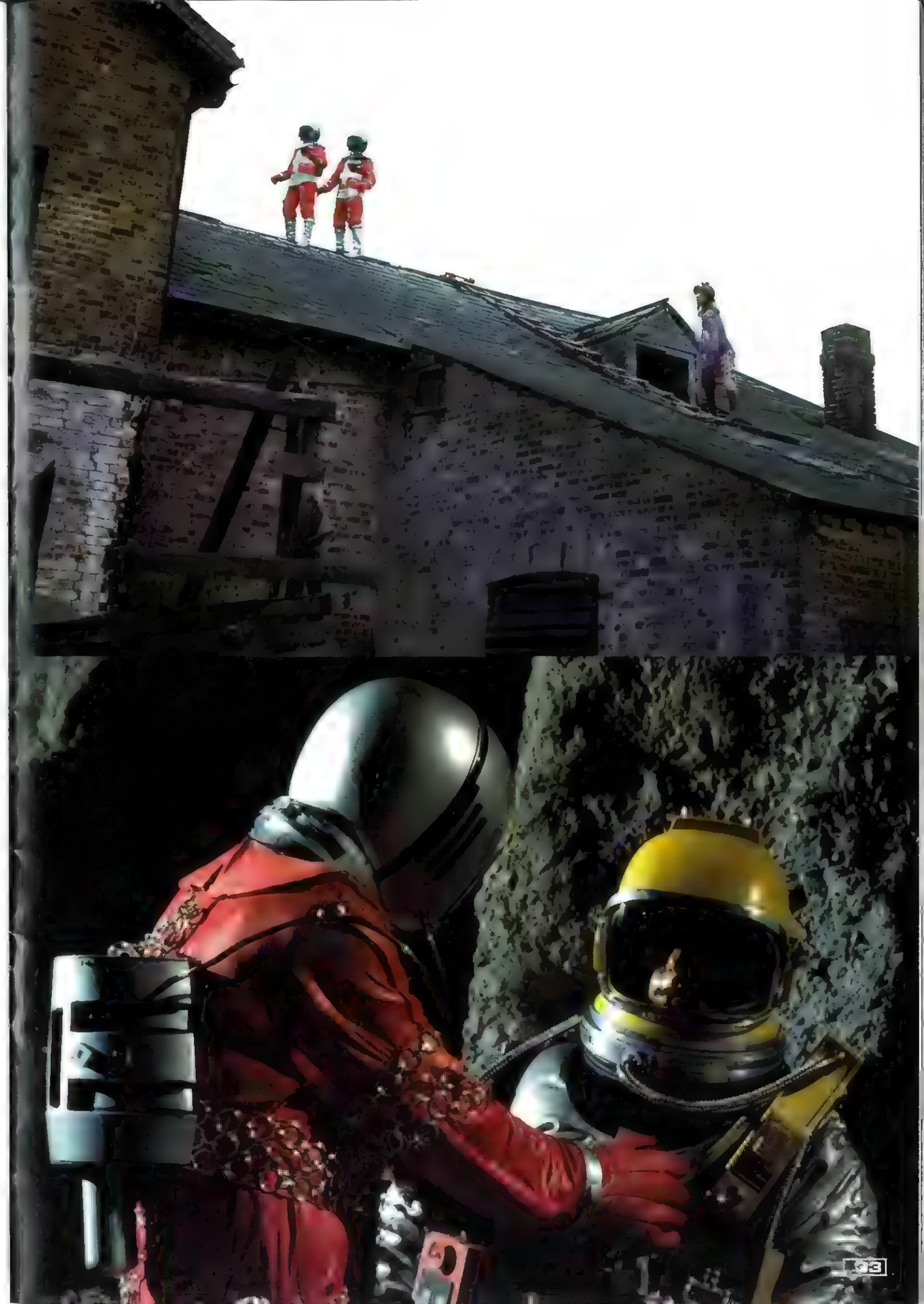
Are you surprised at the popularity of UFO**?**

No, not at all. **UFO** is a damn good programme. Even though it was made 30 years ago it still looks good. Gerry had some great ideas and I think many of them will come true in real life. Sylvia played a major part in it all. She was a lovely lady who I met again on many occasions at things like movie premieres in the 1970s. Derek Meddings was a very clever man and I am not surprised that he went on to do the Bond films and win an Oscar. I heard this story about Gerry once being asked to do a Bond film. I am not surprised because Gerry is so clever and people wanted him and his ideas and his team to make things for them.

When I was making the programme I truly felt that it was something special. The way those letters - U... F... O... - come down onto the screen at the start of an episode it is kind of special. I don't know how to describe it but it is just like Gerry - unique. ●



Gito Santana on location in Shanghai during filming of the **Flatland** episode *The Devil's Daughter*



Watched by Catherine (Tessa Wyatt), Aliens pursue The Long Sleep on the roof of the farmhouse in **UFO** - *The Long Sleep*

An Alien (Gito Santana) saves the life of Paul Foster (Michael Billington) in **UFO** - *Survival*

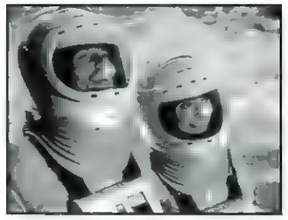
Koenig (Martin Landau), Finds Helena (Barbara Bain) and Bergman (Barry Morse) on Piri in **Space:1999** - *Guardian Of Piri*

Dr Helena Russel (Barbara Bain) explores the Aliens chamber in **Space:1999** - *War Games*

SCRIPT CONSULTANT - SPACE:1999

CHRISTOPHER PENFOLD

Space:1999 - *Breakaway*



Space:1999 *The Last Sunset*

Christopher Penfold **is best-known for his work as script consultant on the first season of Gerry Anderson's** Space:1999. **He is also credited as the author of five episodes of that season, but uncredited for his work on the scripts of *Breakaway* and *Black Sun* (which left almost nothing of the original writers' work) and his own script for *Guardian Of Piri*.**

Christopher Penfold's writing career began in the early 1970s during a three year foray to Australia where he worked as an editor and director in radio and television. He began to write radio scripts for ABC in Sydney, mainly arts features about Australian poets, painters and architects, but gradually he started to write his own material and has maintained a full time career as a writer ever since.

Returning to England in 1972, Penfold was hired as script editor of The Pathfinders, an ITV wartime drama filmed at Elstree Studios. It was here that Penfold first met Gerry Anderson who was, at the time, working on The Protectors. Penfold went on to script the Cliff Richard musical Take Me High (1973), but Anderson was impressed by Penfold's work on The Pathfinders and invited him to be script editor on a proposed second season of UFO, which eventually transformed into Space:1999.

As the series' story consultant, Penfold was responsible for commissioning scripts and re-writing them to fit the series' format, a job that he shared with script editor Johnny Byrne. In this capacity, he undertook major rewrites on *Breakaway*, *Black Sun* and *Alpha Child*, but he also contributed a number of scripts that he wrote himself, starting with *Guardian Of Piri* (on which he was oddly uncredited for the screenplay) and continuing with *The Last Sunset* and *War Games*. Penfold left the series after seventeen episodes following a failure to resolve creative differences with Anderson, and two scripts that he had already written for the series before his departure were produced in his absence - *Space Brain* and *Dragon's Domain*. As a freelance writer, he later wrote *Dorzak* for the second season, but his script was almost entirely rewritten by Fred Freiberger.

Over the last twenty years, Penfold has worked consistently in film and television contributing to series such as Kids, The Brack Report, Lovejoy, Call Me Mister, One By One, All Creatures Great And Small, Truckers, The Bill, EastEnders and Casualty. In 1985, he adapted the acclaimed John Christopher novel *The City Of Gold And Lead* as a twelve-part serial for the second season of the BBC's The Tripods. He is currently developing a variety of new television projects for Scottish Television.

In 1996, Tim Mallett and Glenn Pearce spoke to Christopher Penfold for Fanderson's The Space:1999 Documentary, but it was only possible to include a small portion of the interview in the completed programme. The full interview is reproduced here.

How did you first become involved with writing for Space:1999**?**

Well, I was working at Elstree Studios, first of all on a series called **The Pathfinders** and then on a feature film with Cliff Richard. Gerry Anderson was at Elstree doing **The Protectors** at the time and I got to know him during that period. I'd not met Gerry before although I was aware of the work that he and Sylvia Anderson had been doing for a number of years in British television.

Everybody at Elstree expected **The Pathfinders** to fold because it was set up in such a way that I was employed as script editor only three weeks before the first day of shooting and there were no scripts. But the weeks went by and the series didn't fold and the scripts arrived on time, and I think that was what impressed Gerry: the fact that the scripts for **The Pathfinders** had actually arrived there on time, so he stood a good chance of getting scripts on time for his new series.

I think another reason why he approached me was because he wanted a change from the kind of writing and writers that had brought him through the early puppet series and into **UFO**. He wanted somebody, I think, who would deal with character and ideas in a slightly different way to that which he'd been used to before. At that time, I wasn't even very much interested in sci-fi, but I think that Gerry wanted from me the kind of writing and the kind of contribution that would give the new series a quality of difference which I think he felt it needed. I think that he felt

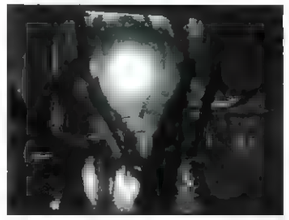
Above: Christopher Penfold signs autographs at the PsyCon **Space:1999** convention in Manchester in 1992

ANDERSON SCREENOGRAPHY

Space:1999 (1973/74) - Script Consultant
Space:1999 (1973/74) - Script Writer
- *Breakaway* (re-write of original script by George Bellak)
- *Black Sun* (re-write of original script by David Weir)
- *Guardian Of Piri*
- *Alpha Child* (re-write of original script by Edward di Lorenzo)
- *The Last Sunset*
- *War Games*
- *Space Brain*
- *Dragon's Domain*

Space:1999 (1976) - Script Writer
- *Dorzak* (original script re-written by Fred Freiberger)

Space:1999 - *Space Brain*



Space:1999 *Dragon's Domain*

Martin Landau (as Commander John Koenig) and Barbara Bain (as Dr Helena Russell) pose for a publicity photo prior to filming **Space:1999**'s opening episode *Breakaway*

that he wanted somebody to take it into another dimension.

The initial discussions we had were about the possibility of making a new series of **UFO**. Well, I hadn't worked on **UFO** and hadn't even really watched it very much. I had not been a fan of **Thunderbirds** and the kind of sci-fi that they were then doing with puppets was not the kind of television which I found it necessary to find the time to watch. I made this very clear to Gerry when he first talked to me about working with him on a series, but I think that he must have seen something in the work that I was doing which he thought would provide a new ingredient that he knew was going to be a departure for him.

When he invited me to work on the new series it was an offer that nobody could refuse. I had just done this exhausting series at Elstree and straight after that I had had a lot of fun making the last of Cliff Richard's feature films, for which I wrote the screenplay. So there I was, working at Elstree Studios and the idea of moving on from that to something which grew as big as **Space:1999** eventually grew was something that I found tremendously exciting.

How did it come about that the new series of UFO **ultimately transformed into** Space:1999**?**
To begin with Gerry approached me saying that he had been asked to prepare for a new series of **UFO** and that's initially what we were going to do. I can't at the moment remember the point at which a directive came from ITC that it was not going to be a new series of **UFO** but a new series altogether, and I suspect that the change probably came from ITC New York, from Abe Mandell. I think he saw the success that **Star Trek** was having in syndication and I think he saw the possibility of doing another space exploration series. When we realised that we were going to be involved in doing something like that and the possibility of dealing with the kinds of ideas that **Star Trek** in its best episodes was quite unafraid to deal with, we were all very excited. And that what we would have in addition to that would be the kinds of special effects that Stanley Kubrick had developed for **2001: A Space Odyssey** made a lot of us very excited indeed.

It was interesting because our own thinking on the new series of **UFO** was in the direction of taking it away from Earth and getting it into space.

The original series of **UFO** had been very much Earthbound, but we were influenced by a sense of wanting to do a series which was not about life on Earth, so I think we were all very pleased at the idea of getting off into space. We had a lot of discussions about how that might be achieved and there were a lot of very enthusiastic and interesting people who were involved in those discussions. Gerry brought in Keith Wilson, his art director, and Brian Johnson, who had been involved in the special effects on **2001**, and we sat around in Gerry's office at Elstree Studios and at his home in Gerrards Cross, and we had very exciting and anarchic discussions about how we could get away from Earth. I can't now at this point remember exactly how the decision came that we should be on the Moon and that the Moon should blast out of orbit. All I know is that there was this terrific collective sense of excitement when we realised that that was something which we could actually do.

Who was it that came up with the idea to use nuclear waste as a means to blasting the Moon out of Earth orbit?
I think it's possible that the idea might have come from me. I've been very much interested in the politics of nuclear power for a long time and I subsequently spent quite a lot of time making **The Brack Report** which was all about that. I think it might very well have come from me, but even if it didn't it was an idea that appealed to me very strongly.

Were you influenced by UFO **when it came to writing the new series?**
Not a lot, I don't think. I certainly sat and watched a few episodes of **UFO**, but at that time something much more influential on our thinking was **Star Trek** and a very fine sci-fi film which Douglas Trumbull directed called **Silent Running**. I think that **Silent Running** and a combination of some of the best episodes of **Star Trek** that had been made formed much more the basis of our new thinking than previous episodes of **UFO**.

What was it about your initial discussions for Space:1999 **that particularly appealed to you as a writer?**
That they should be interested in characters as people, that they should regard each episode of the new series as a play, that it was about human experience although the setting was eventually in space, that it would be very much focussing on human emotions - essentially that we would be writing about real people although set in an apparently unreal environment.

I think that there are a basic stock of ideas about the human condition, about the place of Planet Earth in the universe and quasi-religious

Space:1999 - *Dragon's Domain*

Commander John Koenig (Martin Landau) and Dr Helena Russell (Barbara Bain, with the new-born Jackie Crawford (Wayne Brooks) in **Space:1999** *Alpha Child*

notions of what there is in the way of life beyond Earth, whether in Heaven or on other planets or in other worlds, and I think that that was something that we were all very interested in. I was certainly interested in the idea of making popular the kind of sci-fi which dealt unashamedly with metaphysical ideas and in the first series of **Space:1999** a lot of the episodes (not all of them, but a lot of them) confronted some of those issues head on, and I think they made very good programmes.

Of course, we had to remember all the time that we were making popular television entertainment and that we were doing so at a time when action was what was thought to be the thing that most people turned on to watch. But what we were very much trying to do was to devise situations and confront real human characters with experiences which would certainly involve them in some action, but which would also enable them to bounce ideas off each other and enquire about what was happening. We placed characters in mind-blowing situations and allowed them to discuss what might actually be happening to them, and I think that that added a new dimension, another dimension, to a lot of people's everyday experience.

One of the things I really like about sci-fi is that it offers the opportunity of dealing with an otherworldly environment with ideas and emotions and facets of everyday life on Earth in a completely different context. One of the episodes which I remember most fondly was *War Games* which, as its title implies, was a very powerful anti-war episode.

A lot of the ideas that we dealt with in the series have, of course, now become everyday ideas: for example, our concern for the environment and so on, which was at a fairly low level at that period, but which is now much more popular and much more to the forefront of everybody's lives. Maybe programmes like **Space:1999** and **Star Trek** contributed to that. We were delighted to be involved in a television series which made it possible to take interesting contemporary ideas and extrapolate into an otherworldly environment and to do really interesting things with those ideas.

I thought of the series right from the beginning as a saga. We had a microcosm of the earthly community which was drifting eternally through space. We felt that that gave us an almost endless opportunity of creating new stories, stories which were to do with the way in which life in that microcosm of Moonbase Alpha developed, the relationships which changed amongst the personnel of the base itself as they became increasingly aware that they were never going to return to Earth, that they were the sole representatives of the human race in outer space.

I think we felt that we could have developed those characters and those relationships in new story situations for as many series as ITC wanted.

How did the series' title come about?
Well, titles for television series and books either come effortlessly right at the beginning of the creative process and present themselves as the controlling idea of the thing, or else they're the result of endless discussions about titles. With **Space:1999** we played the titles game endlessly. **Space:1999** was Gerry's working title for the show and I don't think any of us thought very enthusiastically about it. We accepted it as a working title with a growing sense of awareness that the more that working titles get into print the more they tend to stick. Of course, we had started out as "UFO 2," but we came up with a lot of other ideas once we abandoned the **UFO** connection, amongst them "The Space Ark" and "The Moon In Space." I can't actually remember any of the other titles but in the end we felt that, although it was shamefully derivative of **2001**, we should stick with **Space:1999**. I don't think any of us were really happy with it - I don't particularly feel very happy with it even now, but there it is - it's on the film, so it's too late to change it now!

How did you go about developing the key characters for the series?
I suppose that once we had arrived at the idea of a Moonbase, the most important character was going to be the commander of the Moonbase. I suppose we thought that this person would be a kind of quasi-military kind of person because it was a quasi-military base, and I think that the idea of a doctor probably grew out of that situation too. It was a dangerous environment, an environment which was beyond most people's experience, so I think that the idea of a doctor grew quite naturally out of that. In terms of the ideas, the most interesting character of all was Professor Victor Bergman, in that he was the person who was really manning the frontier of this environment in terms of the ideas and the kinds of situations that they might face. Of course, none of them anticipated that they would face the situation of being blasted out of Earth orbit but, as it turned out, he was the one best equipped to deal with those possibilities.

Space:1999 - *Black Sun*

Koenig (Martin Landau) with the Servant of the Guardian (Catherine Schell) on planet Piri in **Space:1999** - *Guardian Of Piri*

How did you find working with Martin Landau and Barbara Bain?

When Martin and Barbara arrived, they were very welcoming to everybody at the London end who had already been working on the series for some time. They were very hospitable and I spent a lot of very exciting and enjoyable evenings talking about scripts with both of them at their house in Little Venice. Both of them took a very close interest in the scripts and both of them were very interested in the kind of scripts that we were producing, scripts which involved quite sophisticated ideas, and both of them gave us quite a lot of feedback.

How much did the series' American sales effect what you were doing?

Well, the series was being made primarily for an American market and so the American market was, in effect, our paymaster. We were all aware, or became increasingly aware, that ITC New York had ideas for the series that were quite sharply divergent from our own, and I think that the strength of those ideas and the way in which the ITC influence eventually prevailed can be seen in the quite sharp difference between series one and series two. When we started work on **Space:1999**, I don't think any of us were particularly excited to be dealing with monsters and cowboys in space for the sake of gratuitous action, so we deliberately avoided that approach, but increasingly through series one we became aware that that was the kind of thing that ITC New York felt was going to sell the series to its audience. I think the subsequent history of the series has proved them wrong.

Initially at least, a number of American writers - George Bellak, Art Wallace and Edward di Lorenzo - were employed to write scripts for the series.

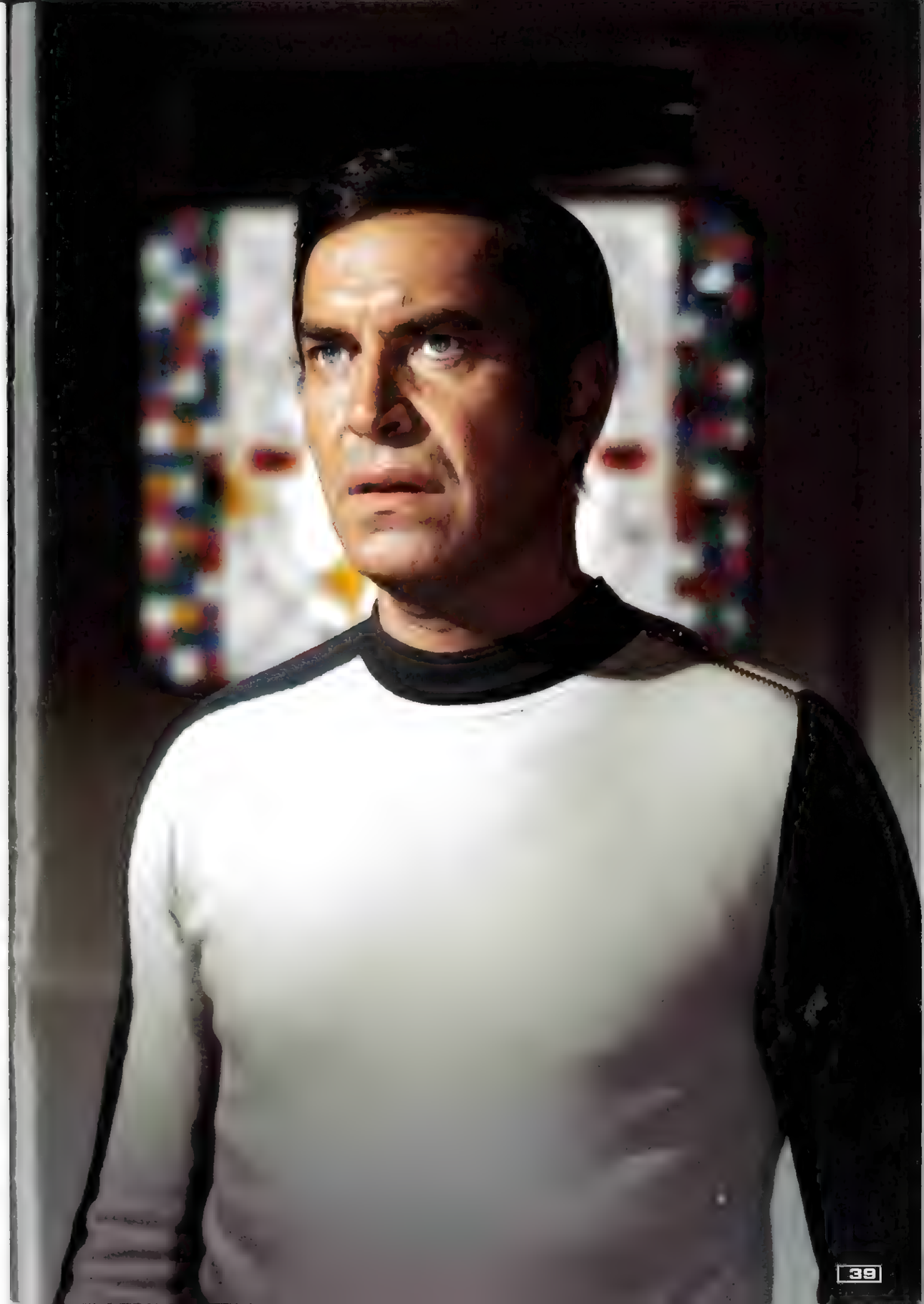
Yes, that's right. When the series was transformed from **UFO** into **Space:1999**, Gerry and Sylvia went off to the US to find American leads for our new series, and what ITC wanted at the time, too, was for at least half of the show to be written by American writers. So Gerry told me before they went that they were going to have to look for an American story consultant who would, in effect, replace me, although I would continue to work on the series. So off they went and Gerry spent a lot of time interviewing people with the thought in the back of his mind of whether each person he spoke to would be able to get on with me.

Eventually, he found George Bellak who arrived to take over as story consultant - I would be the story editor. George and I met and Gerry was absolutely right with his instincts about George because we got on extremely well together and we remain, even now, very close friends. But the one person that George was not able to get on with eventually was Gerry himself, so in the run-up to the production of the first episode - which was eventually titled *Breakaway* - George, who had really put his own indelible stamp on the series in the writing of that first script, departed back to New York and I took over again as story consultant. I was personally very sorry to see George go, but we had the series to get on with and, although many of the basic story ideas that George produced remained there in *Breakaway*, in fact quite a lot of the writing of the episode as it was eventually shot was done by me.

I tried very hard to continue the process of involving American writers on the series, but there were a lot of difficulties which we hadn't foreseen. It became impossible to have transatlantic telephone script conferences with writers who had never seen the sets, with whom I had never been able to sit down in the room face to face and discuss with them the basic parameters of the series, and so on. We had a lot of scripts which were commissioned originally from American writers which were completely re-written by us in England at Pinewood Studios for no other reason than production requirements.

The only writers on Year One that had worked on previous Gerry Anderson programmes were Jesse Lasky Jr., Pat Silver and Anthony Terpiloff who had all worked on The Protectors. **Did you make a conscious decision to employ new writers rather than writers like Tony**

The Servant of the Guardian (Catherine Schell) invites Koenig (Martin Landau) to share the peace of Piri in **Space:1999** - *Guardian Of Piri*



Bottom: Tony Vardeson (Tony Arnold) and Alan Carter (Nick Tate) with Sanala (Jill Townsend) in **Space:1999** - *Dorzak* / Top: Carter (Nick Tate) and Sanala (Jill Townsend) in **Space:1999** - *Dorzak*

The Alphans enjoy the benefits of the new Lunar atmosphere in **Space:1999** - *The Last Sunset*

Barwick and Donald James who had worked with Gerry before?

When Gerry asked me to work on the new series, one of the things he was looking for was a change from the stable of writers that had really developed, as writers for television, with him through his previous series. One of the best of those writers was Tony Barwick who had a brilliant story mind and who had done excellent work for Gerry on some of his previous series, particularly on **The Protectors**. Tony was a very reliable writer and, indeed, he had worked for me on **The Pathfinders**, but I think that Gerry wanted a quality of difference and so I didn't ask Tony to work on the new series. He later contributed to the second series though, as did Donald James.

When I was looking for new writers for **Space:1999**, I approached Johnny Byrne because I knew he was a sci-fi writer. I had seen a recent television play of his which was actually not sci-fi so I knew that he was also a writer who would fit my first requirement, which was that the writers should be good dramatists with a real interest in exploring human emotions. And so Johnny came to work as a writer and eventually became absolutely a right-hand person for me and we had a very successful kind of relationship, which has continued even up until now - we resumed work together on **All Creatures Great And Small**, which couldn't be more different from **Space:1999**. Johnny brought a terrific sci-fi enthusiasm to the series. He brought a very vivid imagination and the authority of somebody who was already well-versed in sci-fi, which I wasn't, and his contribution was extremely valuable.

Although I was, and have always been, on the look-out for new writers, once we'd started work on **Space:1999**, the pressures were so intense that there simply wasn't the opportunity of spending large swatnes of time with new writers, helping them to come to grips with what were very

Koenig (Martin Landau) and Professor Bergman (Barry Morse) ponder the implications of the gift from planet Ariel in **Space:1999** - *The Last Sunset*

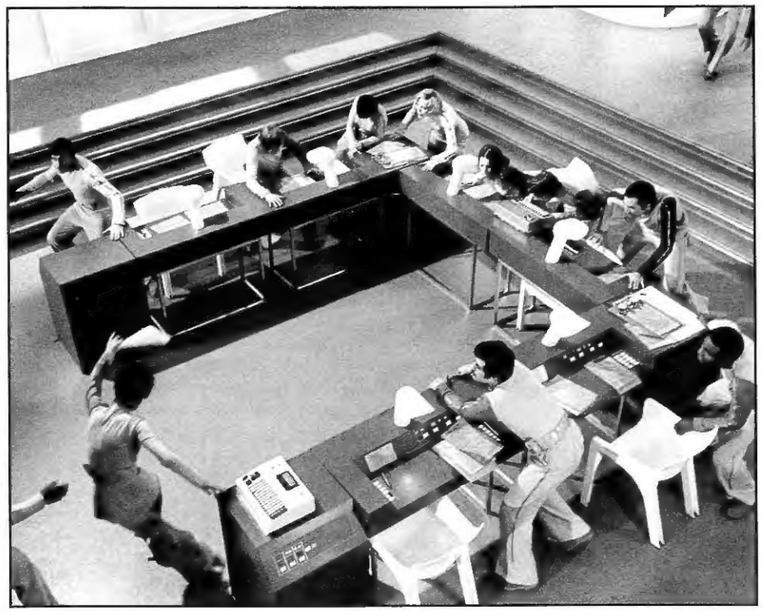
sharp limitations of making **Space:1999** as a studio-based sci-fi environment. You can imagine the kinds of limitations that were imposed on the writing and really, in the end, it fell to quite a small nucleus of writers who understood what those limitations were, were very professional about their approach to the need for things to change for production reasons, and who were not too fussy about other people affecting those changes because they understood why and how they had to be done.

I'm a firm believer in the fact that what gives an outstanding episode its staff of quality is the original idea. There were writers who contributed episodes to the series, who are credited with episodes on **Space:1999**, who might feel disappointed about the amount of their work that remains in the shot film, but there is no doubt that without the basic creative ideas, the excitement, enthusiasm and creative work that they put in, those episodes would certainly not have been as good as they were. Of course, the writers might feel that the episodes are not as good as they might have been but I think that, by and large, the writers who stayed with the series throughout the first season recognised and understood what the production problems were and recognised that changes were being made for the best or, at least, because they had to for production reasons.

Was it your responsibility to initiate all the story ideas?

No, the story ideas came from a variety of different sources really. I certainly initiated some myself. Other writers that I asked to come in and talk about the series brought ideas of their own. Gerry actively encouraged other people who were working on the show, in particular people like Keith Wilson and Brian Johnson, to show us models or planet environments that were in their heads which might throw up story ideas and, indeed, some of the stories did come from those sources. There was a good collaborative approach and some of the directors who began to work on the series also contributed story ideas as the series developed.

I remember that *Guardian Of Piri* developed from a television play called **Spawn** that I had written for London Weekend Television. One of the central characters was a sculpturer who produced a sculpture which filled the front garden of a country house with objects that looked like pieces of frogspawn. I think I talked to Keith Wilson about



Main Mission is rocked by the explosion of NDA-2 in **Space:1999** - *Breakaway*

that and he developed this remarkable alien environment with floating polystyrene bubbles.

A lot of the people working on **Space:1999** were young people and there was a youthful enthusiasm which buoyed the series up. But some of the major contributions came from, in some ways, the unlikeliest sources. We were all enormously privileged to work with one of the best directors that the British Film industry has ever produced - Charles Crichton. I worked very closely with Charles who directed eight episodes in the first series and he approached this television series with the same kind of dedication and the same kind of enthusiasm as he had brought to all of his great feature films. He brought to it a professionalism, a pursuit of quality which started with the scripts which he followed through very much in his casting and in his direction of the actors. Although I don't think that Charles, like me, was anything very much of a sci-fi buff before he became involved in **Space:1999**, his contribution to the series was inestimable.

Were you restricted in your approach by budgetary concerns?

Not really. Gerry was very good and creatively encouraging about what we could do in terms of money. I think Gerry's attitude was, "You give me the ideas and let's see how much of them we can produce." I mean, of course, we were all aware that there were cost parameters within which we had to work, but I think that one of the exciting things about working on **Space:1999** was that the attitude, as far as Gerry was concerned, was that anything is possible and if we can't produce exactly what's in your mind, we'll get something fairly close to it. We knew that in many ways it would look like a studio and a contrived environment, but that wasn't what the series was about. The series was about ideas and about characters facing an extraordinary predicament which, fortunately, none of us have to face.

The series has often been unfairly criticised for scientific inaccuracy, most notoriously by Isaac Asimov in an article for *The New York Times*. Was scientific plausibility something that was considered during script development?

Oh, absolutely. We wanted the scripts, the stories, to be self-evidently credible within the context of each episode. We wanted everything to be rooted in scientific possibility, if not fact, and we often took professional advice about many of the scientific notions we were dealing with. Yes, we did want to make it right. Of course, it was fantasy and we were very free with our dramatic licence, but certainly we wanted to give everything a foundation in fact.

You left the series before the end of Year One. Why was that?

As the series developed, the increasing concerns of ITC for a kind of sci-fi which I felt was very alien to me, began to have the effect of undermining the scripts which were being written, and we had very good scripts which had to go back to the drawing board to meet a requirement which had come from Abe Mandell, who didn't appear to have any understanding that if you take one strand out of a script, it effects everything else in the script. So a lot of re-writing, needless re-writing, went on and this had the effect of bringing the scripts further and further behind schedule. The difficulties eventually came to a head and Gerry asked me to leave the series.

At that point, I was fairly clear in my mind where the pressures on Gerry were coming from. I don't remember having any severe falling out with him, but I realised the way the wind was blowing as far as story content was concerned and I was, at that point, utterly exhausted anyway. Certainly I had regrets about the way in which the series appeared to be heading and I would certainly have loved to stay with it to the end had things been different, but I look back on the series with a great deal of affection and I'm still in touch with quite a lot of the people that I worked with then.

I remember the series very fondly in a lot of ways, but over the last few years I have become aware of the revival of interest in it in a variety of different ways. I recently met some ex-Art students with their own fashion business whose whole collection was inspired by **Space:1999**, and they came here to talk about the series. They sat and looked at me across the table absolutely convinced that everyone involved in the series was on acid at the time, which I can certainly say for myself was not the case. What we were high on, if anything, was adrenaline. Everybody was so excited at the prospect of being in the same market place as **Star Trek**, doing something which we felt was markedly different and which, had we been able to pursue it, would I think have resulted in the same kind of success. The opportunity of dealing with the same kind of metaphysical ideas in conjunction with the kind of special effects which Stanley Kubrick had developed on **2001** gave us, we felt, a formula for success in popular sci-fi, which put us all on the crest of a very high wave. ●

Koenig (Martin Landau), Helena (Barbara Bain) and Alan Carter (Nick Tate) ponder the alien device in **Space:1999** - *The Last Sunset*

VISUAL EFFECTS SUPERVISOR

STEVEN BEGG

Steven Begg **followed in the footsteps of Derek Meddings and Brian Johnson when he was unexpectedly promoted to special effects director on Gerry Anderson's 1983 series** Terrahawks. **He went on to supervise the visual effects for** Space Police **and** Space Precinct **and continues his association with Anderson after nearly twenty years as conceptual designer on** Firestorm.

Edinburgh-born Steven Begg **made his film industry debut in 1982 when he joined Gerry Anderson's production team at Bray Studios as a storyboard artist on** Terrahawks. **Graduating first to conceptual design work and then becoming effects assistant to visual effects supervisor Ian Scoones, Begg was essentially thrown in at the deep end when Scoones suddenly left the series and Anderson invited him to take over. Begg subsequently directed the pilot episode of the stop-motion animated series** Dick Spanner **and joined the visual effects team working on James Cameron's** Aliens **(1986) before supervising the visual effects for Anderson's** Space Police **pilot episode *Star Laws*.**

He then joined Derek Meddings's effects crew on Batman **(1989) and** The Never Ending Story II: The Next Chapter **(1990) and went on to work on** Hardware **(1990),** Time Runner **(1993),** Project Shadowchaser II **(1994) and** Nostradamus **(1994) before being employed by Gerry Anderson once again on** Space Precinct. **Since** Space Precinct **completed production in 1995, Begg has worked on a variety of film and television projects including** GoldenEye **(1995),** The Adventures Of Pinocchio **(1996), the 1997 TV mini-series of** 20,000 Leagues Under The Sea, Lost In Space **(1998),** The Avengers **(1998) and** The Acid House **(1998). More recently, he was visual effects supervisor on** Tomb Raider **(2001) and has created the vehicle designs for Gerry Anderson's new animated series** Firestorm. Ralph Titterton **spoke to him during production of** Tomb Raider.

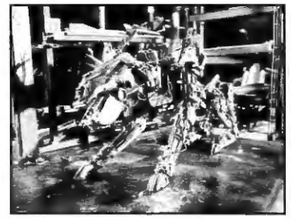
It seems hard to believe that already more than six years has passed since Space Precinct **was completed, but your career with Gerry Anderson goes back nearly twenty years now.**

Yes, I started with Gerry on **Terrahawks** in 1983, which for me was a crash course in model visual effects. Although it is generally not very well regarded, I have fond memories of working on that show.

It was basically a pastiche of all the earlier Gerry Anderson shows rolled into one. One of the things I enjoyed about it more than anything, is that I became great drinking buddies with Tony Barwick who was the show's main writer, and he would often ask me if there were any sequences or shots that I fancied doing. So jumping at the opportunity, I suggested some stuff and he would incorporate it into a script. Typical sequences that come to mind are the Overlander crashing over a collapsing bridge in *Thunder Path*, a futuristic night-time city in *Play It Again, Sram*, a Close Encounters-like space ship in *Cry UFO*, and a **Battlestar Galactica**-type space battle in *First Strike*.

Above: Steven Begg animates Megabyte for **Space Police** - *Star Laws* using traditional stop-motion techniques

Terrahawks



Space Police

ANDERSON SCREENOGRAPHY

Terrahawks (1983/84) - Special Effects Director
Dick Spanner (1984) - Director
The Case Of The Human Cannonball (Part 1)
Space Police (1986) - Visual Effects Director
Dick Spanner (1986/87)
- Director of Photography
The Case Of The Human Cannonball (Parts 2-11)
The Case Of The Maltese Parrot (Parts 1-11)
Parker's Day Off (Swinton's Commercial) (1990) - Visual Effects Director
GFI (1993) - Conceptual Design
Space Precinct (1994/95)
- Visual Effects Director
Captain Scarlet And The Return Of The Mysterons (2000)
- Conceptual Design
Firestorm (2002) - Conceptual Design

Dick Spanner

Space Precinct

Zelda's base on Mars created by Steven Begg for **Terrahawks**

Towards the end, I became very proud of our action and space sequences which I thought matched and occasionally surpassed the work on shows like **Space:1999** which had much bigger budgets.

When Terrahawks **wrapped, did you automatically move from this production onto** Space Police, **and at that time was this show seen as going directly to a series?**
In the period between **Terrahawks** and **Space Police** I worked on the pilot show for **Dick Spanner**. What was originally seen as a cartoon animation became a model animation show which was the main reason I got involved. Gerry knew I was keen on model animation and had my own 16mm camera, and figured that I should take charge of the pilot. So with four model makers, I lit, directed and animated, while Gerry wrote the script, edited and produced. The whole thing was shot in what had been the **Terrahawks** workshop at Bray Studios and basically put together using plasticine characters, cardboard sets and a lot of string and Sellotape. It had quite a lot of charm visually and script wise, but was ruined for me by that bloody awful theme music by Christopher Burr.

Anyway, 18 months later it became a series. Before that I moved on to **Aliens** for James Cameron where I started doing storyboards. Then I handled a small model unit that did all the shots that the bigger main model unit were too busy to handle. This was a very interesting project in that apart from a handful of space shots, Cameron wanted everything done in-camera with no optical work. So I spent my time on that film using a lot of the tricks and techniques I'd learned on **Terrahawks**, albeit in a bigger way. Working with another Gerry Anderson alumni, cameraman Paddy Seale, I was responsible for about 30 shots in **Aliens**. It's not widely known but Cameron was a big fan of **Thunderbirds** and the other Anderson shows, and he wanted that look in his film. He said that the Drop Ship in the film is his homage to Thunderbird 2!

Before **Aliens** was completed, **Space Police** started and I thought that I didn't want to miss out on that, so I left **Aliens** and subsequently damaged my chances of a credit on that film, something I regret big time now.

The **Space Police** pilot was seen as a one-off film which would be used to sell the idea for a series, and was completely financed by Gerry and Christopher Burr.

What was the thinking behind the Space Police **concept, and did you have any input into planning the end product?**
I had very little input other than that I suggested that the opening chase should take place in a giant alien mega-city rather than a desert as originally scripted. This was based on the relatively successful attempts at visualising the kind of sequence we had on **Terrahawks**. Gerry agreed and that's the way it went. It ultimately influenced the approach to **Space Precinct** in a big way.

Although it is essentially a 'cops in space' show, the second half of the programme that involved the trapped President on the Monorail very much has a Thunderbirds **feel to it.**
There was talk of it having a more adult **Hill Street Blues**-in-space approach but I must admit that the moment that the show left the city settings it did have a more **Thunderbirds** feel about it, what with the monorail, the desert, collapsing bridges, etc. I feel it was also tainted a bit with the **Dick Spanner**-like names of some of the characters like V Lann, E Vile, and so on, so I think that ultimately it was targeted at a family audience.

The finished production looked pretty good thanks in main to Mark Harris who was the production designer. He had also just come off **Aliens** and was keen to export a lot of that film's look into **Space Police**. Some of it got in, some didn't. As for my work, I wasn't terribly happy with the monorail sequences although I thought that some of the city stuff was pretty good, in particular a POV through the cockpit of Brogan's cruiser which was a multi-exposure in-camera effect.

I approached it by sticking a model of the cockpit, which had no light on it, on to the front of the camera which was then tracked through the city model, focusing and exposing only the city in the background. Then the film was rewound and the cockpit lit and focused on. This was then double exposed in, and with subsequent exposures for all the video monitors and readouts we ended up with a pretty impressive shot. Afterwards, after feeling pretty smug with myself, Harry Oakes, the cameraman, pointed out that they had used an identical technique years before for the Sky One and Mobile cockpit shots on **UFO**!

Between completing the original pilot film and starting work on Space Precinct, **you worked on a lot of other unrelated productions. What brought you back to working with Gerry?**
Not long after the **Space Police** pilot, **Dick Spanner** got the green light for a series and I spent about six months as the cameraman and

Filming the Overlander on a collapsing bridge for the **Terrahawks** episode *Thunder Path*

A visual effects technician prepares the President's monotrain for its climactic crash in **Space Police**

directed a couple of episodes on that. Afterwards, my involvement with Gerry diminished for a while and I worked on a variety of low budget films doing model work, matte paintings, animation, basically a bit of everything. Then Derek Meddings contacted me and I worked as a technician for him on **Batman** and **The Never Ending Story II** and I learned a lot of tricks from him. His ability to build a convincing miniature landscape out of a load of sand and general crap always amazed me and I got to know him quite well.

During this time, I heard occasionally from Gerry about **Space Police**. My next big involvement with Gerry was on the ill-fated **GFI**, a cartoon animation show on which I supplied concept designs for the hardware and characters. Unfortunately, due to problems in Russia where some of the animation was being done, the production was ultimately scrapped. At around about this time Gerry established contact with John Needham who I gather saw potential in **Space Police**. Then with Mentorn Films, they cut a promotional short using material from the pilot which essentially sold the project.

During this time the whole format of the show was totally redesigned, so much so that all that was left was Lieutenant Brogan, Slomo and the series title, and even that changed later. As someone involved in making both versions of Space Police, **how do you view those changes?**
I think it evolved into something potentially much more interesting. For me the original played far too much for laughs.

Was there an attempt to get a particular feel for the show? Was it viewed by the people making it as a cop show, a sci-fi show, or a combination of the two?
There was definitely a conscious effort to push the cop element and de-emphasise the sci-fi at the start script-wise. This was not necessarily a bad idea, but it was just seriously misinterpreted by some in a way that had a profound effect on the show, in my opinion.

Your original concept design for the Police Cruiser is incredibly different from what ended up on the screen. Why was that, and did you end up designing the Cruiser we are all familiar with?
To me the Cruiser was a cross between a helicopter and the space shuttle and that is why I originally saw it as primarily an aero-dynamic shape for atmospheric flight and huge over-the-top engines that could haul it up into space. I had planned to make a big deal out of the shots where its space engines kicked in, with a huge computer-generated contrail coming off it as it rocketed into space. There was talk early on about it being the only craft that could fly in the atmosphere of the planet and be capable of space flight, thus giving it an advantage over the other flying craft.

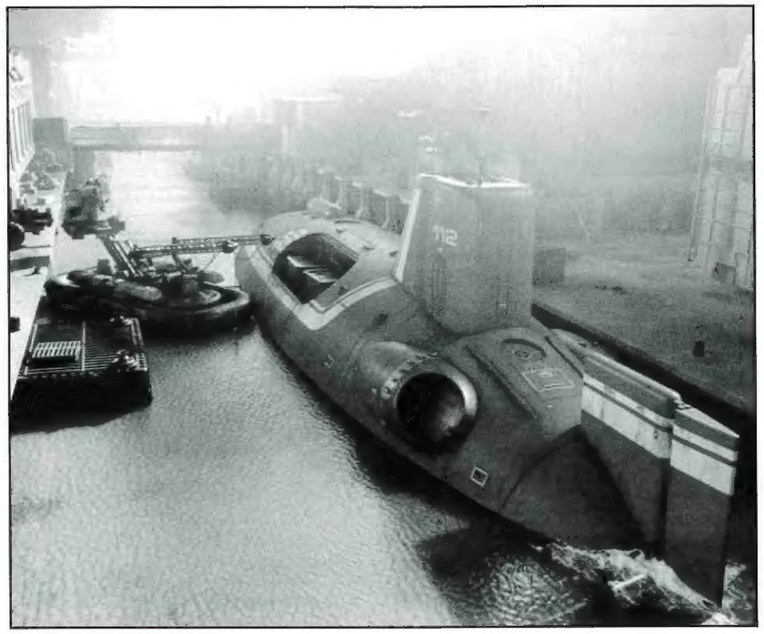
Due to a change in concept and thanks to the fact that our CGI department took ages to get up to speed, the contrail approach was dropped, apart from a shot in the titles. Its appearance was modified in order to make it look more car-like, and make it easier to build as a full scale prop. The modification was done by Bill Pearson who was the Head of Department of the model shop.

Your effects work on Space Precinct **was often quite dark and moody with a** Blade Runner/Batman **sort of feel to it, while the live-action often seemed to be in total contrast. How was the overall visual design for** Space Precinct **decided, and what sort of communication was there between the two departments to try and ensure that all the footage would be complimentary?**
As I said earlier, there were different points of view departmentally on the various approaches to the show. I felt that although the sci-fi elements were being played down script-wise that the visual effects work should still look sci-fi. This view did not appear to be shared by the live-action art department. For example, the script might mention a 'Transit', in other words a craft that would convey characters up and down from the space precinct and suburb. But we would end up with a Transit van which was all they could think of, and we would get lumbered with the job of trying to make it a believable space ship which I'm not sure we really succeeded in doing.

We had similar problems making the buildings and architecture of the city look alien or futuristic when most of them appeared to be constructed from house bricks and corrugated iron. In fact, a lot of people I spoke to afterwards thought that Demeter City was on Earth in an alternate dimension, and that the Tarns and Creons had invaded, as in **Alien Nation**! We sort-of fixed the problem when Jim Cornish, our storyboard artist, started to liaise closely with the art department, so then we started to anticipate continuity and design problems and sort it out, but the main problem never really went away.

I must add that things on the visual effects side in the beginning were not exactly hunky-dory. While I am happy with some of the effects work

Our private detective hero follows up a lead in **Dick Spanner**



A submarine is loaded with freight at the Demeter City docks in **Space Precinct** - *Takeover*

(the motion control space shots were superior to anything that was in **Star Trek** at the time), a great deal of the stuff was below par, particularly at the beginning. The pizza bike chase in the first episode is just plain embarrassing and bloody awful!

This was due to two factors. Although I requested that the script writers possibly give us effects-light episodes to start with, we got the exact opposite, and the model unit did not have all the necessary rigs and models ready when we started shooting. The problem is that when you do the equivalent of a Demeter City car chase, you need loads and loads of camera angles for contemporary cutting, so I had to produce a dozen complicated variations of an aerial car chase on a daily basis. The scale of the models we had were too small, and I had to go scavenging for model buildings from other productions in order to flesh out our Demeter City.

Later, we started to make the chases work better by actually sliding the foreground buildings along on rails in the opposite direction of travel. It made the vehicles look like they were travelling a lot faster than we physically could make them, courtesy of the fact we had to fly them a lot of the time using old-fashioned wire techniques. I thought there was quite a good chase in a snowy blizzard in *Hate Street*.

It is considered by many that Space Precinct **was really starting to come together towards the end of the series. Do you agree with this view, both as an overall production and from your visual effects perspective, and had the show gone to another series how would you have expected this to progress?**

There was a definite improvement in most areas in the episodes towards the end of the show's run. The last two-part episode really had a feel worthy of the *The X Files*. On the FX front, I felt that we had generally got better and the scope of the shots improved. We started to put people into model environments, which was something that had been planned at the beginning but unfortunately the digital department initially got swamped by mundane shots such as putting images in monitors. In *Hate Street*, we had wide shots of Brogan and Haldane searching a huge automated factory in space, that I reckon for production value rivalled shots in big budget features.

How far, if at all, were plans made for season two?

There was some talk of making it darker and tougher, and some possible changes in the casting, but I can't remember any details. We did discuss moving the FX unit from Shepperton to Pinewood to be alongside the main unit, which would have suited me as I would have got more involved in integrating the look of both. We also considered setting up our own digital FX department rather than subcontracting the work.

Did Space Precinct **live up to its publicity of being "the most expensive TV show ever"?**

I think it did the show absolutely no favours in that it builds up the audience's expectations to such a degree that nothing you can show them will blow them away when they think you had millions of pounds to play with. In many places, the truth was quite the opposite.

What would you have liked to have seen done differently, had you the opportunity to make Space Precinct **all over again?**

From a visual effects standpoint, while I would still do some model work, I would do a lot more with computer graphics. When I started **Space Precinct** my CG knowledge was less than zilch, but since then, with the exception of things like **Lost In Space**, I have worked almost exclusively with computers. The CG work in **Precinct** is pretty unremarkable even for its time, one of the reasons being that I didn't push them hard enough because I didn't know enough about it. I would also try to do more second unit type stuff like the interior of the Stealth Bomber that the model unit did for the last episode. I thought that looked pretty good.

I understand that Gerry's proposed new series Eternity **came from an original concept of yours. What can you tell us about this show?**

I met up with John Needham about a year ago and we talked about what worked and what didn't on **Space Precinct** and how to approach it differently, as there appeared to be an opportunity looming to kick-start another series. Needless to say that came and went but we continued to discuss that different approach to a new concept, but something of the same scale as **Precinct**. John then took that to Gerry who seemed to like it and with John, developed and fleshed out the project until it became **Eternity**. I'm very much talking about something that came out of **Precinct**, but which is quite different and in many ways more ambitious, but it is still early days yet. ●

The cockpit of the Stealth Bomber, created and filmed by Steven Begg's model unit for the **Space Precinct** episode *Deathwatch Conclusion*

Dick realises that his life is on the line in **Dick Spanner** - *The Case Of The Maltese Parrot*

The Station House Docking Bay in **Space Precinct** - *Takeover*

TV Stars on Strings

Director Ken Turner has to check that the puppet is perfectly in position before filming begins. On this small scale, the tiniest movements will be greatly magnified on film so attention to detail is very important.

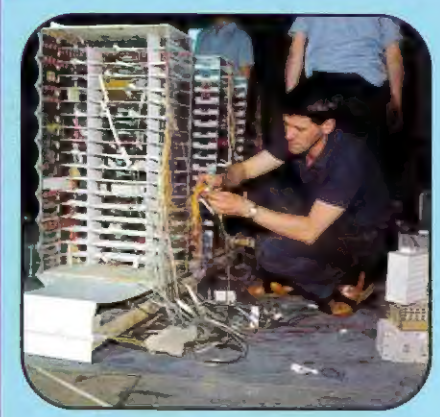
Each of these puppets from the "Supercar" series only had one head with a fixed expression. For "Thunderbirds", each character has five interchangeable heads to achieve a full range of expressions.

Puppeteers Wanda Webb and Christine Glanville usually operate the characters high above the puppet set, some 15 feet from the studio floor on an overhead gantry.

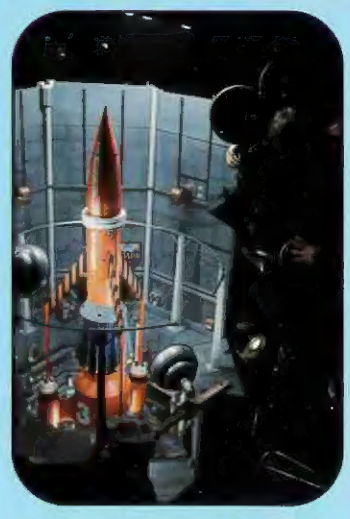
Sometimes the puppet's movement is too complicated to control from the overhead gantry, so Christine Glanville manipulates the wires from the studio floor, just out of the camera frame.

Wire-free "under control" puppets are used for close-up shots and scenes in which a character cannot be operated from above due to the restrictions of the puppet set.

The model-makers use a variety of materials to create the miniature vehicles, buildings and landscapes for "Thunderbirds", including balsa wood, cardboard, polystyrene and vermiculite roof insulating material.



A special effects technician may spend many weeks creating a model which is ultimately not used - as in the case of this model building being made for "Thunderbirds Are Go" which will be cut from the final print of the film.



The model sequences are filmed in slow-motion at 120 frames a second using special Mitchell R35 high-speed cameras. This requires five times the normal amount of lighting.

As technically-advanced as the process of Supermarionation is, Joe 90 still requires the services of a floor puppeteer to hold his legs in place in order to prevent him from falling out of his chair.